

**TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN THE SEPTUAGINT VERSION OF THE
BALAAM ACCOUNT**

by

KYLE ALLEN BIERSDORFF

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.....

Dr. Robert J.V. Hiebert, Ph.D.; Thesis Supervisor

.....

Dr. Larry J. Perkins, Ph.D.; Second Reader

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

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SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

cod.	codex
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
LXX	Septuagint
Lat	Latin
MS	Manuscript
MT	Masoretic Text
OG	Old Greek
OT	Old Testament (both the Hebrew and Greek versions)
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch

ANCIENT TEXTUAL AND LITERARY SOURCES

16	Greek minuscule manuscript of the <i>C</i> group
46	Greek minuscule manuscript of the <i>cII</i> group
100	An Old Latin manuscript
129	Greek minuscule manuscript of the <i>f</i> group
426	Greek minuscule manuscript of the <i>O</i> group
551	Greek minuscule manuscript of the <i>cII</i> group
Aeth	Ethiopic version
Aq	Aquila
Arm	Armenian version
Bo	Bohairic version
Dead Sea Scrolls	
1QM	<i>War Scroll</i> (1Q33)
1QS ^b	<i>Rule of Blessing</i> (1Q28b)
4Q23	4QLeviticus-Numbers ^a
4Q27	4QNumbers ^b
4Q175	4QTestimonia
CD	<i>The Damascus Document</i> (4Q266-273)

Irenaus	
<i>Adv. Haeres.</i>	<i>Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)</i>
<i>Demonstr.</i>	<i>Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching</i>
Justin Martyr	
<i>I Apol.</i>	<i>First Apology</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
Philo	
<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo (On the Life of Abraham)</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit (Who Is the Heir?)</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Mosis (On the Life of Moses)</i>
<i>Plant.</i>	<i>De plantatione (On Planting)</i>
<i>Praem.</i>	<i>De praemiis et poenis (On Rewards and Punishments)</i>
<i>QG</i>	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin (Questions and Answers on Genesis)</i>
Sa	Sahidic version
Syh	Syrohexapla
Sym	Symmachus
Th	Theodotion
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>T. Judah</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>Tg. Onq.</i>	<i>Targum Onkelos</i>
<i>Tg. Ps.-J.</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>
<i>Tg. Neof.</i>	<i>Targum Neofiti</i>

JOURNALS, BOOKS, AND SERIES

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885-1887. 10 vols. Repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907
<i>BHS</i>	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Stuttgart, 1983
<i>BHK</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica</i> . Edited by R. Kittel. Stuttgart, 1973

<i>BO</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (of Jordan)
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Translation of the Bible
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
LEH	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i> . Edited by J. Lust, E. Eynikel, K. Hauspie, and G. Chamberlain. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992.
NETS	<i>The New English Translation of the Septuagint</i>
<i>NGTE</i>	John William Wevers, <i>Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus</i>
<i>NGTG</i>	John William Wevers, <i>Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis</i>
<i>NGTN</i>	John William Wevers, <i>Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr. 2 vols. Chicago, 1980
<i>THGN</i>	John William Wevers, <i>Text History of Greek Numbers</i>

ABSTRACT

Although the Septuagint translation of the Balaam account is in many ways similar to that found elsewhere in the LXX Pentateuch, two aspects of the translation are distinctive in the LXX and important indicators of the translator's interpretation of the text. First, the translator frequently represents the Hebrew יהוה with the Greek θεός, a striking departure from the normal LXX translation practice. This divergence likely reflects an anti-Balaam bias on the part of the translator. Second, the translator gives unusual renderings for portions of Balaam's oracles. These are often cited as evidence of Septuagintal messianic interpretation. This thesis surveys the LXX translation of the Balaam account and examines these two issues in the context of textual transmission, the linguistic constraints of the source and target languages, translation practice elsewhere in the Septuagint, and in other related literature of the period.

INTRODUCTION

The Balaam account is perhaps one of the most unique narratives in the Hebrew Bible. The story of a non-Israelite prophet, hired by a king to curse Israel, interrupted by an angel and rebuked by his donkey, who finally arrives at his destination only to bless Israel instead of curse it is unprecedented in the book of Numbers and in the Pentateuch, where non-Israelites rarely play such a prominent role. The figure of Balaam, and the prophecies he spoke, also posed an interpretive challenge for readers. How were they to understand the ambiguous figure of Balaam, who although intending to curse Israel ultimately blessed it? How should his oracles reaffirming God's intent to bless Israel and predicting its future exaltation be understood? Balaam's reputation throughout history has been mixed, and his prophecies provided fodder for speculation about the future of Israel and the possibility of a conquering and ruling figure who would rescue and lead Israel.

Alongside the technical aspects of translating a text from Hebrew to Greek, the Septuagint translator also engaged these interpretive challenges and provided a translation which reflects both his faithfulness to the text and his own perspective on these issues. This thesis investigates two of the major areas in which the Septuagint translation differs from the Hebrew text, and their significance for our understanding of the interpretation of the translator: (1) the translator's marked preference for θεός in the narrative as expressing his understanding of Balaam's relationship to God and the role of the divine in the events described, and (2) the rendering of Balaam's oracles, especially in 24:7 and 24:17, that reflect the translator's interpretation of these predictions.

1. Sources

The primary Hebrew text for comparison is the Masoretic Text (MT) published in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, but frequent reference is made to the text from the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP).

The book of Numbers exists in fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and portions of Numbers 22-24 appear in 4Q23 (4QLev-Num^a) and 4Q27 (4QNum^b). Reference will be made to these as well. The Greek text of the Septuagint is from Wevers' Göttingen edition of the Septuagint.¹ I would furthermore be remiss if I did not here mention the debt I owe to John Wevers and his *Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers*. Although often brief and sometimes imperfect, it is a source of keen observations and valuable insights into the LXX translation of Numbers.

The Deir 'Alla Inscription, discovered in 1967, contains mention of a “Balaam, the son of Beor,” a seer who hears from El, *elohim*, and *šdyn*² and relates this knowledge to the people. Although the inscription is a fascinating piece of early evidence about stories that circulated about Balaam, it has no relevance for questions about the Greek translation of the Hebrew account, and so will not be discussed here.

2. Proposal

In chapter one, I examine the Greek version of the Balaam account, and compare it to the extant Hebrew versions. On many levels, the translation of this section is similar to the rest of the book. However, in two aspects the translator departs from his customary translation practice: (1) in the use and avoidance of the divine name with respect to Balaam, and (2) in the translation of portions of Balaam's third and fourth oracles, which refer to the exaltation of Israel and the emergence of a future ruling figure. These two aspects will be the focus of the following chapters.

In chapter two, I address the treatment of the divine name in the Balaam narrative. The translator appears to avoid using κύριος in a context where the narrator speaks of divine interaction with Balaam. Some explanations have been offered to explain this practice. I argue that these explanations are

¹John William Wevers, *Numeri* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

²Baruch Levine translates “Shadday-gods,” (*Numbers 21-36: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 245f.

essentially correct, while attempting to place them on firmer footing by looking at the broader context of the treatment of the divine name throughout the LXX Pentateuch.

In chapter three, I engage the question of messianic emphasis in the translation of Balaam's third and fourth oracles. The poetic Hebrew of the oracles is more challenging than the surrounding prose, and the translator is forced to provide a freer, more interpretive translation. In doing so, the translator reveals his own interpretation of the oracles as referring to an individual messianic figure.

The resulting form of the Greek translation sheds light both upon the understanding of the Balaam account in the historical and geographic context in which it was translated, and upon the reception history of the Old Testament. This thesis attempts to make a small, but meaningful, contribution in both of these areas.

CHAPTER ONE: THE GREEK VERSION OF THE BALAAM ACCOUNT

Chapter Synopsis: Chapter one provides an English translation of the Septuagint and compares the Greek text to the Hebrew, focusing on text-critical issues and lexical issues, as well as elements that have bearing on the following chapters.

1. Introduction

This chapter includes a translation of Numbers 22-24 with select analysis. Unfortunately, the length of the Balaam account makes the full inclusion of the Greek, Hebrew, and English versions prohibitively long, and consequently I have opted to include the Hebrew only in the notes. The English translation is that of the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS). NETS offers a translation that attempts to represent the Septuagint as produced, and provides a translation that reflects the stylistic spectrum of the Old Greek version, ranging from isomorphic to idiomatic renderings. Any footnotes in the English translation, however, are mine. I have noted the occasional instance where I question the NETS rendering. My analysis focuses on matters of potential textual and exegetical significance, especially with regard to two of the most noteworthy characteristics of the Septuagint translation: the treatment of the divine name and the translation of the possibly messianic material in the oracles. This chapter is intended to cover the basic information that will be investigated in detail in the following chapters, as well as to provide a backdrop for the following discussions. Although I focus on those areas in which the translation diverges from its source text, it should not be forgotten that, overall, the Greek follows the Hebrew closely. The translation of Numbers can be said to generally follow an “interlinear” or unit-for-unit approach, and the translator’s usual fidelity to the form and sense of his source text makes these exceptions all the more striking.

Among the books of the LXX Pentateuch, comparatively little ink has been spilled on the subject of the translation character of LXX Numbers. The most comprehensive study of LXX Numbers

translation (in English) is John William Wevers' *Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers*.³ Wevers concluded that LXX Numbers is the weakest translation in the Greek Pentateuch.⁴ In his view, the translation contains a striking inconsistency in the quality of translation. The translator often appears careless or inattentive, omitting sections and introducing grammatical or lexical infelicities into the text. All is not lost, however, and Wevers finds a significant degree of thoughtfulness and astuteness in the translation as well. The translator was concerned to provide a text accessible to its readers, often to a greater degree than some of the other LXX translators.⁵ LXX Numbers also contains the characteristics of other LXX translations such as a tendency toward consistency and following patterns (often more closely than the MT does), harmonizations, attempts at clarification and resolving contradictions, as well displaying interpretive and theological values.⁶

2. The LXX Version of the Balaam Account

Balak's Invitation to Balaam (22:2-21)

22:2 Καὶ ἰδὼν Βαλάκ υἱὸς Σεπφόρ πάντα, ὅσα ἐποίησεν Ἰσραὴλ τῷ Ἀμορραίῳ,³ καὶ ἐφοβήθη Μωάβ τὸν λαὸν σφόδρα, ὅτι πολλοὶ ἦσαν, καὶ προσώχθισεν Μωάβ ἀπὸ προσώπου υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ.⁴ καὶ εἶπεν Μωάβ τῇ γερούσιᾳ Μαδιάν Νῦν ἐκλείξει ἡ συναγωγή αὕτη πάντας τοὺς κύκλῳ ἡμῶν, ὥς ἐκλείξει ὁ μόσχος τὰ χλωρὰ ἐκ τοῦ

22:2 And when Balak son of Sepphor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorrite,³ also Moab feared the people very much, because they were many, and Moab was vexed because of the presence of Israel's sons.⁴ And Moab said to the council of elders of Madiam, "Now this gathering will lick up all those who are around us, as the bull calf might

³John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers* (SCS 46; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). Hereafter *NGTN*.

⁴Wevers, *NGTN*, lx.

⁵Wevers observes, "The demands of the target language play a greater role in Num than in Deut which is often literalistic in its rendering....the linguistic demands of Greek are respected to a greater extent in Num than in Deut." (*Text History of the Greek Numbers*, Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 94.

⁶Space does not permit a survey of all of Wevers' observations and examples, (cf. the introduction to *NGTN*). A few recent articles address limited aspects of LXX Numbers: Anssi Voitila argued that the translator translated small segments of text at a time, resulting in a literal translation that rarely takes the larger context into account ("The translator of the Greek Numbers," in *IX Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Cambridge, 1995* [SCS 45; ed. Bernard A Taylor; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 109-21). Hans Ausloos argued that the translator of LXX Numbers harmonized a section of his text (Numbers 14:23) with Deut 1:39 ("LXX Num 14:23: Once More a "Deuteronomist" at Work?" in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Oslo, 1998* [SCS 51; ed. Bernard A. Taylor; Atlanta: SBL, 2001], 415-27). James Findlay proposed that the translator displays a pro-Aaronide and anti-Levitical bias in his translation of chs. 16-17 by highlighting the role of Aaron and focusing on Korah as the object of divine wrath ("The Priestly Ideology of the Septuagint Translator of Numbers 16-17," *JSOT* 30 [2006]: 421-29). Overall, one finds that LXX Numbers, while containing some distinctiveness, is not radically different from the other books in the LXX Pentateuch. The translation shows strengths and weaknesses, and the translator's own perspective shows through in some places.

πεδίου. καὶ Βαλὰκ υἱὸς Σεπφὼρ βασιλεὺς Μωὰβ ἦν κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐκεῖνον.⁵ καὶ ἀπέστειλεν πρέσβεις πρὸς Βαλαάμ υἱὸν Βεὼρ Φαθούρα, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ γῆς υἱῶν λαοῦ αὐτοῦ, καλέσαι αὐτὸν λέγων Ἴδοὺ λαὸς ἐξελήλυθεν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου, καὶ ἰδοὺ κατεκάλυπεν τὴν ὄψιν τῆς γῆς, καὶ οὗτος ἐγκάθηται ἐχόμενός μου.⁶ καὶ νῦν δεῦρο ἄρασαί μοι τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον, ὅτι ἰσχύει οὗτος ἢ ἡμεῖς· ἐὰν δυνώμεθα πατάξαι ἐξ αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐκβαλῶ αὐτοὺς ἐκ τῆς γῆς· ὅτι οἶδα οὗς ἂν εὐλογήσης σύ, εὐλόγηται, καὶ οὗς ἂν καταράσῃ σύ, κεκατήρηνται.

lick up the greenery of the plain.” And Balak son of Sepphor was king of Moab at that time.⁵ And he sent ambassadors to Balaam son of Beor of Pathoura, which is on the river of the land of his people’s sons, to call him, saying, “Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and behold, it has covered the sight of the earth, and it is lying in wait next to me.⁶ And now come, curse for me this people, since it is stronger than we are, if we may be able to strike some of them, and I will cast them out from the land. For I know that whomever you bless are blessed, and whomever you curse are cursed.”

3: The translator renders the Hebrew phrase: **מפני העם מואב ויגר** with καὶ ἐφοβήθη Μωὰβ τὸν λαὸν σφόδρα. The use of **פנה** with the preposition **מ** indicates cause or reason, i.e. “Moab was in great fear *because* of the people.”⁷ Here the LXX employs the accusative, τὸν λαόν. Later in the same verse the translator provides ἀπὸ προσώπου υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ for the Hebrew construction, **מפני בני ישראל**.

3: ὅτι πολλοὶ ἦσαν, a plural adjective and verb translates the Hebrew **כי רב־הוא**, which is singular. LXX Numbers shows a great degree of variation in its treatment of collective nouns and concepts, frequently going with a sensible rendering rather than following the Hebrew as closely as possible.

5: Balak sends πρέσβεις, while the Hebrew has **מלאכים** (MT, SP, 4Q27). The translation of **מלאך** by πρέσβυς is rare, occurring only two other times in the LXX: Numbers 21:21 and Deuteronomy 2:26. ἄγγελος is by far the more common translation for **מלאך** in Numbers and in the LXX overall. The Hebrew uses several different terms to refer to those whom Balak sent to summon Balaam; the evidence is summarized in the following chart:

	LXX	MT ⁸
22:4	τῇ γερουσίᾳ Μαδιαμ	זקני מדין
22:5	<u>πρέσβεις</u>	<u>מלאכים</u>
22:7	ἡ γερουσία Μωαβ καὶ ἡ γερουσία Μαδιαμ	זקני מואב וזקני מדין

⁷See HALOT, “פנה” section 5d, BDB “פנה” section 6a-b.

⁸Here SP, 4Q27 = MT.

22:8	οἱ ἄρχοντες Μωαβ	שרי־מואב
22:13	τοῖς ἄρχουσιν Βαλακ	שרי בלק
22:14	οἱ ἄρχοντες Μωαβ	שרי מואב
22:15	ἄρχοντας	שרים
22:18	<u>τοῖς ἄρχουσιν</u> Βαλακ	עבדי בלק
22:21	τῶν ἀρχόντων Μωαβ	שרי מואב

Wevers suggests that the translator's use of πρέσβεις in verse 5 was influenced by זקני in verse 7, but that the translator probably understood πρέσβεις as a better term than זקני to refer to both groups of elders (of Moab and of Madiam). In verse 18 the translator ignores the use of עבדי and translates τοῖς ἄρχουσιν, following the terminology established from v. 8 onward.

5: The MT has בני־עמו, literally “sons of his people.”⁹ Some other Hebrew manuscripts, as well as SP, have בני־עמון, “sons of Ammon.”¹⁰ The LXX source text must have had the same reading as the MT, since the translator provides the equally awkward υἱῶν λαοῦ αὐτοῦ.

6: Balak summons Balaam to curse the Israelites. The MT uses three different terms for “cursing” in the Balaam account: ארר, קבב, and זעם. The verb ארר occurs 63 times in the OT and 7 times in the Balaam account.¹¹ The verb זעם occurs 12 times in the OT and 3 times in the Balaam account.¹² קבב occurs 14 times in the OT and 10 times in the Balaam account.¹³ The distribution of curse language in Numbers 22-24 is illustrated in the following table:

	LXX	MT		LXX	MT
22:6	ἄρασαι	ארר	23:8	τί ἀράσωμαι	מה אקב

⁹Some modern translations treat עמו as a proper noun, e.g. “Amaw” (NRSV) or “Amawites” (NAB, NJB)

¹⁰So *BHS*, cf. also the Vulgate “Ammon.”

¹¹At 22:6(3x), 12; 23:7; 24:9(2x).

¹²At 23:7, 8(2x).

¹³At 22:11, 17; 23:8(2x), 11, 13, 25(2x), 27; 24:10.

			ὄν μὴ ἀρᾶται	לֹא קָבַה
22:6	καταράσῃ σύ κεκατήρηνται	תִּאֲרָ יוֹאֵר	23:8 ἢ τί καταράσωμαι ὄν μὴ καταρᾶται	וְמָה אֲזַעֵם לֹא זַעֵם
22:11	ἄρασαι	קָבַה	23:11 κατάρασιν	לְקָב
22:12	καταράσῃ	תִּאֲרָ	23:13 κατάρασαι	וּקְבֹנוּ-לִי
22:17	ἐπικατάρασαι	קָבַה	23:25 κατάραις καταράσῃ	תְּקַבְּנוּ
23:7	ἄρασαι	אֲרָה	23:27 καταρᾶσαι	וּקְבֹתוּ
23:7	ἐπικατάρασαι	זַעֵמָה	24:10 καταρᾶσθαι	לְקָב

The translator uses one root word (ἀράω/ἀράομαι) with compound cognates: καταράομαι (most commonly), ἀράομαι, and ἐπικατάρασαι. The translator does not follow a discernable pattern in his choice of Greek equivalents to the above-mentioned Hebrew terms. However, the translation does reflect the degree of lexical variation of the source text.

22:7 καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἡ γερουσία Μωάβ καὶ ἡ γερουσία Μαδιάν, καὶ τὰ μαντεῖα ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἦλθον πρὸς Βαλαάμ καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ τὰ ῥήματα Βαλάκ. ⁸καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς Καταλύσατε αὐτοῦ τὴν νύκτα, καὶ ἀποκριθήσομαι ὑμῖν πράγματα, ἃ ἂν λαλήσῃ κύριος πρὸς με. καὶ κατέμειναν οἱ ἄρχοντες Μωάβ παρὰ Βαλαάμ. ⁹καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Βαλαάμ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Τί οἱ ἄνθρωποι οὗτοι παρὰ σοί; ¹⁰καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ πρὸς τὸν θεόν Βαλάκ υἱὸς Σεπφὼρ βασιλεὺς Μωάβ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς πρὸς με λέγων ¹¹Ἴδου λαὸς ἐξελήλυθεν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου, καὶ ἰδοὺ κεκάλυφεν τὴν ὄψιν τῆς γῆς, καὶ οὗτος ἐγκάθεται ἐχόμενός μου· καὶ νῦν δεῦρο ἄρασαί μοι αὐτόν, εἰ ἄρα δυνήσομαι πατάξαι αὐτόν καὶ ἐκβαλῶ αὐτόν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς. ¹²καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Βαλαάμ Οὐ πορεύῃ μετ' αὐτῶν οὐδὲ καταράσῃ τὸν λαόν· ἔστιν γὰρ εὐλογημένος. ¹³καὶ ἀναστὰς Βαλαάμ τὸ πρωὶ εἶπεν τοῖς ἄρχουσιν Βαλάκ Ἀποτρέχετε πρὸς τὸν κύριον ὑμῶν· οὐκ ἀφήσιν με ὁ θεὸς πορεύεσθαι μεθ' ὑμῶν. ¹⁴καὶ ἀναστάντες οἱ ἄρχοντες Μωάβ ἦλθον πρὸς Βαλάκ καὶ εἶπαν Οὐ θέλει Βαλαάμ πορευθῆναι μεθ' ἡμῶν.

22:7 And the council of elders of Moab went, and the council of elders of Madiam,¹⁴ and the instruments of divination were in their hands, and they came to Balaam and said to him the words of Balak. ⁸ And he said to them, “Lodge here tonight, and I will answer you matters the Lord may speak to me.” And the rulers of Moab stayed with Balaam. ⁹ And God came to Balaam and said to him, “What are these people with you?” ¹⁰ And Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Sepphor, king of Moab, sent them to me, saying, ¹¹ ‘Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and behold, it has covered the sight of the earth, and it is lying in wait next to me. And now come, curse it for me, if indeed I shall be able to strike it, and I will cast it out from the land.’” ¹² And God said to Balaam, “You shall not go with them, nor shall you curse the people, for it is blessed.” ¹³ And Balaam rose up in the morning and said to the rulers of Balak, “Run off to your master; God does not permit me to go with you.” ¹⁴ And the rulers of Moab arose and went to Balak and said, “Balaam does not want to go with us.”

7: The term μαντεῖον usually denotes to an oracle, an oracular judgment, a seat of an oracle, or a

¹⁴There is some textual uncertainty in the rendering of מַדְיָן. Rahlfs gives Μαδιαμ at 22:4, 7, and Μαδιαν at 25:15, 18; 31:3(2x), 7, 8(2x), 9. The Göttingen edition gives Μαδιαν throughout (for Wevers' argument for the priority of Μαδιαν see his *Text History of Greek Numbers*, 117). NETS reflects Rahlfs by giving “Madiam” at 22:4, 7, and “Madian” in the other instances.

method or process of divination. Here, in the plural, it refers to something carried by the elders. NETS translates τὰ μαντεῖα as “the instruments of divination.” However, in the context of the narrative it is best understood as some sort of initial payment. Why would the elders carry implements for divination all the way to Balaam when they intended to bring him back to Moab? Furthermore, once Balaam arrives in Moab, Balak provides all the sacrificial elements that Balaam requires. In any case, μαντεῖον is an adequate representation of קסם, which also usually refers to divination.¹⁵

8: Balaam tells the messengers he will reveal to them whatever יהוה/κύριος says to him. In vv. 9, 10, 12, it is אלהים/θεός who appears to, and interacts with, Balaam. The Hebrew Bible often alternates between יהוה and אלהים, and in the majority of cases the LXX follows the Hebrew by giving κύριος and θεός, respectively. The LXX treatment of the divine name will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

9: The interrogative pronoun τί, which could mean “what?” or “why?” contrasts the MT's מי “who?” Wevers suggests that this may be a deliberate change by the translator, intending to avoid the implication that God does not know the identity of the messengers.¹⁶ However, the SP reads מה, which represents the probable *Vorlage* for the LXX reading.

11: The phrase καὶ οὗτος ἐγκάθηται ἐχόμενός μου has no parallel in the MT or SP, but may have a Hebrew antecedent represented by 4Q27 (והואֹה יושבֹן ממולי). Wevers considers this phrase a case of harmonization with v. 5, where an identical phrase occurs (MT, SP, 4Q23, 4Q27).¹⁷ In light of the Greek's not uncommon correspondence to 4Q27, it seems likely that the translator is representing his Hebrew text here.

¹⁵George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), 329.

¹⁶Wevers, *NGTN*, 365.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 366.

11. ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς has no equivalent in the MT or SP. This may represent a reading found in 4Q27, where the editor reconstructs [בִּן אֶרֶץ].

13: Balaam says τοῖς ἄρχουσιν Βαλάκ, “Run off to your master” (τὸν κύριον ὑμῶν). The Hebrew (MT, SP), however, has לְאַרְצְכֶם “to your land.” The LXX reading may have an antecedent in 4QNum^b, where the editor reconstructs הַמֶּלֶךְ] יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

13: The translator translates יהוה with θεός. This rendering occurs frequently in the Balaam account. Prior to this, in this account, the translator has used the usual equivalents for the divine name, θεός for אֱלֹהִים, and κύριος for יהוה.¹⁸ Outside of the Balaam story, LXX Numbers has five other occurrences of θεός for יהוה, in 9:19; 15:30; 16:11; and 31:41 (these will be examined in more detail in chapter 2).¹⁹

22:15 Καὶ προσέθετο ἔτι Βαλάκ ἀποστεῖλαι ἄρχοντας πλείους καὶ ἐντιμότερους τούτων. ¹⁶ καὶ ἦλθον πρὸς Βαλαάμ καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ Τάδε λέγει Βαλάκ ὁ τοῦ Σεπφὼρ Ἀξιώ σε, μὴ ὀκνήσης ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με. ¹⁷ ἐντίμως γὰρ τιμήσω σε, καὶ ὅσα ἂν εἴπῃς, ποιήσω σοι· καὶ δεῦρο ἐπικατάρασαί μοι τὸν λαὸν τούτον. ¹⁸ καὶ ἀπεκρίθη Βαλαάμ καὶ εἶπεν τοῖς ἄρχουσιν Βαλάκ Ἐὰν δῶ μοι Βαλάκ πλήρη τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ ἀργυρίου καὶ χρυσίου, οὐ δυνήσομαι παραβῆναι τὸ ῥῆμα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτὸ μικρὸν ἢ μέγα ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ μου. ¹⁹ καὶ νῦν ὑπομείνατε αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑμεῖς τὴν νύκτα ταύτην, καὶ γνώσομαι, τί προσθήσει κύριος λαλήσαι πρὸς με. ²⁰ καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Βαλαάμ νυκτὸς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Εἰ καλέσαι σε πάρεσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι οὗτοι, ἀναστὰς ἀκολουθήσον αὐτοῖς· ἀλλὰ τὸ ῥῆμα, ὃ ἂν λαλήσω πρὸς σέ, τοῦτο ποιήσεις. ²¹ καὶ ἀναστὰς Βαλαάμ τὸ πρωὶ ἐπέσασεν τὴν ὄνον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπορεύθη μετὰ τῶν ἄρχόντων Μωάβ.

22:15 And Balak added again to send rulers, more numerous and more distinguished than these. ¹⁶ And they came to Balaam and said to him, “This is what Balak son of Sepphor says, ‘I beg you, do not hesitate to come to me. ¹⁷ For I will honor you honorably, and whatever things you say I will do for you. And come, curse for me this people.’” ¹⁸ And Balaam answered and said to the rulers of Balak, “If Balak gives me his house full of silver and gold, I shall not be able to transgress the word of the Lord God to do it, whether small or great in my mind. ¹⁹ And now remain here, you too, this night, and I will know what the Lord will add to speak to me.” ²⁰ And God came to Balaam by night and said to him, “If these people are here to call you, rise up, and follow them, but the word that I speak to you—this you shall do.” ²¹ And Balaam rose up in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the rulers of Moab.

18: In the Hebrew version of 22:18 (MT, SP, not extant in the DSS), Balaam tells the messengers that he cannot transgress the command of “the LORD my God” (יהוה אֱלֹהֵי). The LXX, otherwise translating the Hebrew closely, omits the pronoun, giving τὸ ῥῆμα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ. Although it is possible that the translator's source text read אֱלֹהֵים, no extant Hebrew witnesses give this reading. Furthermore, it is

¹⁸In the Balaam account the translator renders יהוה as κύριος at 22:8, 18, 19, 34; 23:17, 21; 24:1, 6, 11, 13. θεός for יהוה appears at 22:13, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31(2x), 32, 35; 23:3, 5, 8, 12, 16, 26; 24:13.

¹⁹See also the following discussion on 22:22.

relatively uncommon for a *mem* to be lost in the process of textual transmission. This is therefore best understood as an intentional omission. Wevers comments, “What this means for the narrative is that LXX here fails to designate Yahweh as the personal God of Balaam.”²⁰

18: ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ μου “in my mind” has no equivalent in the MT (or SP). It may be influenced by the similar phrase מַלְבִּי אוֹ רַעַה מְבֹכָה in 24:13.²¹ It may also find a precedent in 4Q27 (4QNum^b), which although fragmentary, appears to have a *lamed* at the end of the verse, on the basis of which the DJD editor infers בִּי לְ[ב].²²

Balaam, The Donkey, and The Angel (22:22-35)

22:22 καὶ ὠργίσθη θυμῷ ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐπορεύθη αὐτός, καὶ ἀνέστη ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνδιαβάλλειν αὐτόν, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπιβέβηκει ἐπὶ τῆς ὄνου αὐτοῦ, καὶ δύο παῖδες αὐτοῦ μετ’ αὐτοῦ. ²³καὶ ἰδοῦσα ἡ ὄνος τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνθεστηκότα ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ καὶ τὴν ῥομφαίαν ἐσπασμένην ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐξέκλινεν ἡ ὄνος ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ καὶ ἐπορεύετο εἰς τὸ πεδίον· καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὴν ὄνον τῇ ῥάβδῳ τοῦ εὐθύναι αὐτήν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ. ²⁴καὶ ἔστη ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ταῖς αὐλάξιν τῶν ἀμπελῶν, φραγμὸς ἐντεῦθεν καὶ φραγμὸς ἐντεῦθεν. ²⁵καὶ ἰδοῦσα ἡ ὄνος τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ προσέθλιψεν ἑαυτήν πρὸς τὸν τοῖχον καὶ ἀπέθλιψεν τὸν πόδα Βαλαάμ· καὶ προσέθετο ἔτι μαστίξαι αὐτήν. ²⁶καὶ προσέθετο ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀπελθὼν ὑπέστη ἐν τόπῳ στενῷ, εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἦν ἐκκλῖναι δεξιὰν οὐδὲ ἀριστεράν. ²⁷καὶ ἰδοῦσα ἡ ὄνος τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ συνεκάθισεν ὑποκάτω Βαλαάμ· καὶ ἐθυμώθη Βαλαάμ καὶ ἔτυπεν τὴν ὄνον τῇ ῥάβδῳ. ²⁸καὶ ἤνοιξεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ στόμα τῆς ὄνου, καὶ λέγει τῷ Βαλαάμ· Τί ἐποίησά σοι ὅτι πέπαικάς με τοῦτο τρίτον; ²⁹καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ τῇ ὄνῳ· Ὅτι ἐμπέπαιχάς μοι· καὶ εἰ εἶχον μάχαιραν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ μου, ἤδη ἂν ἐξεκέντησά σε. ³⁰καὶ λέγει ἡ ὄνος τῷ Βαλαάμ· Οὐκ ἐγὼ ἡ ὄνος σου, ἐφ’ ἧς ἐπέβαινες ἀπὸ νεότητός σου ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας; μὴ ὑπεροράσει ὑπεριδοῦσα ἐποίησά σοι οὕτως; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν Οὐχί.

22:22 And God was angry with wrath, because he went, and the angel of the Lord²³ rose up to oppose him. And he himself was sitting on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ And when the donkey saw the angel of God standing opposed in the road and the sword drawn in his hand, then the donkey turned away from the road and kept going into the plain. And he struck the donkey with his rod to direct it in the road. ²⁴ And the angel of God stood in the furrows of the vineyards, a fence here and a fence there. ²⁵ And when the donkey saw the angel of God, it pressed itself against the wall and squeezed Balaam’s foot, and he added to whip it again. ²⁶ And the angel of God proceeded and went on and stood still in a narrow place in which it was not possible to turn right or left. ²⁷ And when the donkey saw the angel of God, it settled down under Balaam, and Balaam was angered and kept beating the donkey with the rod. ²⁸ And God opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, “What have I done to you that you have struck me this third time?” ²⁹ And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have mocked me! And if I had a dagger in my hand, I would already have stabbed you!” ³⁰ And the donkey says to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey on which you would ride from your youth to this very day? Disregarding with disregard—I have not done so to you, have I?” And he said, “No!”

22: The MT and LXX agree on the divine name, giving ὁ θεός/אלהים. This reading is probably

²⁰John William Wevers. “The Balaam narrative according to the Septuagint,” in *Lectures et relectures de la Bible* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1999), 138.

²¹As Wevers concludes (*NGTN*, 370). Cf. *BHS*.

²²DJD XII, 231.

²³NETS gives “the angel of the Lord.” Both Rahlfs and the Göttingen edition read ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ. A few manuscripts and versions have τοῦ κυρίου.

supported by 4Q23 (אֱלֹהִים). However, SP and some Greek and versional witnesses give κύριος/יהוה.

SP may have been influenced by the following מֵלֶאךָ יְהוה, whereas the agreement of the MT, 4Q23, and the LXX probably indicates that אֱלֹהִים is the earlier reading.

22: Earlier, in 22:13, we saw the translator substitute θεός for יהוה. In this section (22:22-35) that becomes the translator's standard practice. In vv. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, and 35 the translator gives θεός for יהוה, instead of the expected κύριος. Except for the occurrences in vv. 28 and 30 (describing divine actions: giving the donkey the facility of speech and opening Balaam's eyes to see the angel) these refer to the angel who intercepts Balaam. The LXX consistently employs ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ as an equivalent to the Hebrew's מֵלֶאךָ יְהוה. The sole exception to this pattern is in v. 34, where Balaam exclaims τῷ ἁγγέλῳ κυρίου “I have sinned.”²⁴ Wevers tentatively suggests that since Balaam may here be repenting, this confession of sin should be directed to “the Lord” rather than an unidentified deity. The issue of the translator's use of κύριος and θεός will be touched upon briefly in the following sections, where relevant, and taken up further in chapter two.

22: The LXX takes the Hebrew לַשֹּׁנִי as a preposition + infinitive, giving ἐνδιαβάλλειν. This is an unusual compound in the LXX, occurring only six times in the LXX (also Ps 37:21; 70:13; 108:4, 20, 29, all translating לַשֹּׁנִי). The Masoretes pointed this differently here, giving לַשֹּׁנִי, a preposition + noun, i.e. “as an adversary.”

23: The translator adds τῇ ῥάβδῳ, presumably influenced by the occurrence of בַּמֶּקֶל (= τῇ ῥάβδῳ) in v. 27.

23: In the narrative, Balaam strikes the donkey three times (vv. 23, 25, 27). The Hebrew uses Hiphil forms of נָכָה in each case, as well as when the donkey speaks and asks why Balaam struck him (v. 28).

²⁴The Göttingen edition records only two minor witnesses against κύριος: 54, Bo give τοῦ θῷ.

The LXX, however, uses a different term each time:

	LXX	MT
22:23	ἐπάταξεν (πατάσσω)	וַיִּךְ (נכה)
22:25	μαστίξαι (μαστίζω)	לִהְכֹתָהּ (נכה)
22:27	ἔτυπτεν (τύπτω)	וַיִּךְ (נכה)
22:28	πέπαικας (παίω)	הִכִּיתֵנִי (נכה)

The Greek terms are roughly synonymous, and the vocabulary may be explained by the translator's personal preference for variety.

29: ἐκκεντέω translates the *qal* הָרַג. This Greek term only occurs here in the Pentateuch, and this is the only occasion in the LXX where ἐκκεντέω translates הָרַג. The Greek term generally means “to pierce,” i.e., “And if I had a dagger in my hand, I would have already stabbed you!” Here the translator gives a more specific and contextually appropriate word to represent the more generic Hebrew.

30: The Hebrew has מְעוֹדְךָ, (probably best understood as “all your life”), which the LXX translates loosely, but acceptably, with ἀπὸ νεότητός σου “from your youth.”

22:31 ἀπεκάλυψεν δὲ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς Βαλαάμ, καὶ ὁρᾷ τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνθεστηκότα ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν ἐσπασμένην ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ κύψας προσεκύνησεν τῷ προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ. ³²καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ Διὰ τί ἐπάταξας τὴν ὄνον σου τοῦτο τρίτον; καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξῆλθον εἰς διαβολὴν σου, ὅτι οὐκ ἄστειά ἡ ὁδός σου ἐναντίον μου. ³³καὶ ἰδοὺσά με ἡ ὄνος ἐξέκλινεν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τρίτον τοῦτο· καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐξέκλινεν, νῦν σὲ μὲν ἀπέκτεινα, ἐκείνην δὲ περιποιήσάμην. ³⁴καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ τῷ ἄγγέλῳ κυρίου Ἠμάρτηκα, οὐ γὰρ ἠπιστάμην ὅτι σύ μοι ἀνθέστηκας ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ εἰς συνάντησιν· καὶ νῦν εἰ μὴ σοι ἀρέσκει, ἀποστραφήσομαι. ³⁵καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς Βαλαάμ Συμπορεύητι μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· πλὴν τὸ ῥῆμα, ὃ ἂν εἴπω πρὸς σέ, τοῦτο φυλάξῃ λαλήσαι. καὶ ἐπορεύθη Βαλαάμ μετὰ τῶν ἀρχόντων Βαλάκ.

22:31 ¶ Now God uncovered the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of God standing opposed in the road and the dagger drawn in his hand, and he bowed down and did obeisance to his face. ³²And the angel of God said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey this third time? And behold, I came out to oppose you, because your way was not pretty before me. ³³And when the donkey saw me, it turned away from me this third time. And if it had not turned away, now surely I would have killed you but kept it alive.” ³⁴And Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, “I have sinned, for I did not understand that you stood opposed to me on the road for a meeting. And now, if it is not pleasing to you, I will turn back.” ³⁵And the angel of God said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but the word that I say to you, this you shall take heed to speak.” And Balaam went with the rulers of Balak.

22:31: Wevers adopts the reading τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ, against Rahlfs' τὸν ἄγγελον κυρίου. Despite its relatively broad textual support,²⁵ Wevers argues that κυρίου is secondary, since the translator's

²⁵Including B, most of the hexaplaric group O', the b and f groups, some marginal notations, and Aeth, Arm, Syh.

practice of giving θεός for יהוה is well established.²⁶

32: At the end of v. 32 the MT has כִּי־יִרְט הַדֶּרֶךְ לִנְגִדִי. The LXX gives οὐκ ἄσσεια ἢ ὁδός σου, probably following the SP's דֶּרֶךְ rather than the MT's הַדֶּרֶךְ. In the Hebrew, the reading attested in 4QNum^b, כִּי־יִרְט, is probably earlier.²⁷ The translator's *Vorlage*, however, was probably that represented by the MT. Faced with יִרְט, a rare term with which he was probably unfamiliar, he provided a contextualized translation: οὐκ ἄσσεια.²⁸

34: In the Hebrew, Balaam tells the angel he will turn back, “if it is evil in your eyes” (אִם־רָע בְּעֵינֶיךָ), whereas the Greek reads “if it does not please you [εἰ μή σοι ἀρέσκει] I will turn back.” Wevers notes that, as a result, the translator avoids the anthropomorphism, but it is not clear that this was his intent.²⁹

35: The LXX gives τοῦτο φυλάξῃ λαλήσαι, following the SP's אֲתָּו תִּשְׁמַר לְדַבָּר, against the MT אֲתָּו תִּדְבֹּר (not extant in the Scrolls). A similar phrase occurs in 23:12.

Balaam Arrives Before Balak (22:36-40)

22:36 Καὶ ἀκούσας Βαλάκ ὅτι ἤκει Βαλαάμ, ἐξῆλθεν εἰς συνάντησιν αὐτῷ εἰς πόλιν Μωάβ, ἣ ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁρίων Ἀρνών, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐκ μέρους τῶν ὁρίων. ³⁷καὶ εἶπεν Βαλάκ πρὸς Βαλαάμ Οὐχὶ ἀπέστειλα πρὸς σέ καλέσαι σε; διὰ τί οὐκ ἦρχου πρὸς με; ὄντως οὐ δυνήσομαι τιμῆσαί σε; ³⁸καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ πρὸς Βαλάκ Ἰδοὺ ἦκω πρὸς σέ· νῦν δυνατὸς ἔσομαι λαλήσαι τι; τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ ἂν βάλῃ ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸ στόμα μου, τοῦτο λαλήσω. ³⁹καὶ ἐπορεύθη Βαλαάμ μετὰ Βαλάκ, καὶ ἦλθον εἰς πόλεις ἐπαύλεων. ⁴⁰καὶ ἔθυσεν Βαλάκ πρόβατα καὶ μόσχους, καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τῷ Βαλαάμ καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν τοῖς μετ' αὐτοῦ.

22:36 And when Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him, to a city of Moab, which is on the borders of Arnon, which is on the edge of the borders. ³⁷ And Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Really, shall I not be able to honor you?” ³⁸ And Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have come to you. Shall I now be able to speak anything? The word that God puts into my mouth, this I shall speak.” ³⁹ And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to cities of quarters. ⁴⁰ And Balak sacrificed sheep and calves and sent them to Balaam and to the rulers who were with him.

39: The LXX translates קִרְיַת חֲצוֹת “Kiriath-huzoth” by πόλεις ἐπαύλεων “cities of quarters”.³⁰ Possibly

²⁶ Wevers, *THGN*, 129-30.

²⁷ Cf. SP כִּי־יִרְט הַדֶּרֶךְ לִנְגִדִי.

²⁸ יִרְט is rare in the OT. BDB (cf. *TWOT*) defines it as “precipitate, be precipitate.” NETS translates οὐκ ἄσσεια as “not pretty” on the basis of the majority of uses of ἄσσειος in the LXX, where the term frequently refers to appearance. Exod 2.2 uses ἄσσειον the newborn Moses; Judg 3:17 describes king Eglon as ἄσσειος σφόδρα “very handsome;” Holofernes compliments Judith, telling her ἄσσεια εἰ σὺ ἐν τῷ εἶδει σου καὶ ἀγαθὴ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου “you are beautiful in your appearance and good with your words;” Susanna is ἄσσειαν τῷ εἶδει (Sus 1:7 [OG]). But it also may be used in a virtuous sense, e.g. 2 Macc 6:23, ὁ δὲ λογισμὸν ἄσσειον ἀναλαβὼν “but making a high resolve” (NETS).

²⁹ Wevers, *NGTN*, 379-80.

³⁰ Or *cities of encampments*.

the translator read קריית as a plural (with a *waw* instead of *yod*) and took חצות as derived from חצר

“settlement.”

Balaam's First Attempt to Curse Israel (22:41-23:7a)

⁴¹καὶ ἐγενήθη πρωί, καὶ παραλαβὼν Βαλάκ τὸν Βαλαάμ ἀνεβίβασεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὴν στήλην τοῦ Βάαλ, καὶ ἔδειξεν αὐτῷ ἐκεῖθεν μέρος τι τοῦ λαοῦ. ^{23:1}Καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ τῷ Βαλάκ Οἰκοδόμησόν μοι ἐνταῦθα ἑπτὰ βωμούς καὶ ἐτοίμασόν μοι ἐνταῦθα ἑπτὰ μόσχους καὶ ἑπτὰ κριοὺς. ²καὶ ἐποίησεν Βαλάκ ὃν τρόπον εἶπεν αὐτῷ Βαλαάμ, καὶ ἀνήνεγκεν μόσχον καὶ κριὸν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμόν. ³καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ πρὸς Βαλάκ Παράστηθι ἐπὶ τῆς θυσίας σου, καὶ πορεύσομαι, εἴ μοι φανεῖται ὁ θεὸς ἐν συναντήσῃ, καὶ ῥῆμα, ὃ ἂν μοι δείξῃ, ἀναγγελῶ σοι. καὶ παρέστη Βαλάκ ἐπὶ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ, καὶ Βαλαάμ ἐπορεύθη ἐπερωτήσας τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἐπορεύθη εὐθεῖαν. ⁴καὶ ἐφάνη ὁ θεὸς τῷ Βαλαάμ, καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν Βαλαάμ Τοὺς ἑπτὰ βωμούς ἡτοίμασα καὶ ἀνεβίβασα μόσχον καὶ κριὸν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμόν. ⁵καὶ ἐνέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς ῥῆμα εἰς τὸ στόμα Βαλαάμ, καὶ εἶπεν Ἐπιστραφεὶς πρὸς Βαλάκ οὕτως λαλήσεις. ⁶καὶ ἀπεστράφη πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ ὅδε ἐφειστήκει ἐπὶ τῶν ὀλοκαυτωμάτων αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄρχοντες Μωὰβ μετ' αὐτοῦ. ⁷καὶ ἐγενήθη πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπ' αὐτῷ,

41 And it became morning, and Balak took along Balaam and brought him up to the stele of Baal, and he showed him from there a part of the people. 23:1 And Balaam said to Balak, “Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven calves and seven rams.” ² And Balak did in the manner Balaam told him, and Balak and Balaam offered up a calf and a ram on the altar. ³ And Balaam said to Balak, “Stand beside your sacrifice, but as for me I will go, if God will appear to me in a meeting. And whatever word he shows me I will report to you.” And Balak stood beside his sacrifice, and Balaam went to inquire of God, and he went straight ahead. ⁴ And God appeared to Balaam, and Balaam said to him, “I prepared the seven altars, and I brought up a calf and a ram on the altar.” ⁵ And God put a word into Balaam’s mouth and said, “When you return to Balak, thus you shall speak.” ⁶ And he returned to him, and the latter stood over his whole burnt offerings, and all the rulers of Moab with him. ⁷ And a divine spirit³¹ was upon him.

41: בַּמּוֹת בַּעַל is translated by τὴν στήλην τοῦ Βάαλ. Wevers suggests that the early LXX translators had trouble with בַּמּוֹת, a rare term in the Pentateuch. The translators of Leviticus and Numbers gave στήλη “monument, pillar” in its first four occurrences. בַּמּוֹת also appears twice in Deuteronomy, at 32:13 and 33:29, where two different contextual translations are provided. בַּמּוֹת is more common in the later books of the Hebrew Bible, and the translators adopted several more suitable terms, e.g. ὑψηλός,³² βωμός,³³ ὕψος.³⁴ Wevers suggests that these renderings in the LXX Pentateuch imply that the concept of idolatrous worship at high places was unknown to the translators in Alexandria.³⁵

1: מִזְבֵּחַ is translated by βωμός, the term adopted by the LXX to refer to pagan altars, in contrast to

³¹Or the spirit of God

³²1 Ki 11:7; 12:31; 13:33; 14:23; 2 Ki 17:9, 11; 2 Chron 21:11; 28:25.

³³Isa 15:2; 16:12; Jer 7:31; 32:35; 48:35; Hos 10:8; Amos 7:9.

³⁴2 Sa 1:25; 22:34; Amos 4:13; Mic 1:3.

³⁵Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus* (SCS 44; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1997), 453-4.

θυσιαστήριον, which is usually used for Israelite altars.³⁶ Certainly an altar built by Balak would be considered pagan, even if the sacrifices offered upon it were directed at the Israelite god.

3: The LXX gives θεός, agreeing the SP and 4Q27 (fragmentary), against the MT's יהוה.³⁷

3: The second half of this verse follows the text found in 4QNum^b. The MT omission can be explained as parablepsis, with the scribe's eye skipping from the first וילך to the second וילך at the end of the verse.

Numbers 23:3b

LXX	MT(SP)	4QNum ^b (4Q27)
καὶ παρέστη Βαλάκ ἐπὶ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ, καὶ Βαλαάμ ἐπορεύθη ἐπερωτῆσαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἐπορεύθη εὐθεῖαν.	וילך שפי:	ו[ילך ויתצב בלק על ע[ו]לתו ובלעם [נקרה אל אלוהים וילך שפי].

5: The LXX has ὁ θεός putting the word into Balaam's mouth. MT has יהוה, while SP and 4Q27 (reconstructed) give מלאך יהוה.

6(7): The Greek reads καὶ ἐγενήθη πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπ' αὐτῷ, whereas the MT (supported by SP, not extant in the Scrolls) has no equivalent. The translator may have had this phrase in his Hebrew *Vorlage* here, but more likely was influenced by the appearance of the same phrase in 24:2.

Balaam's First Oracle (23:7b-10)

23:7 καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τὴν παραβολὴν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν

Ἐκ Μεσοποταμίας μετεπέμψατό με Βαλάκ,
βασιλεὺς Μωὰβ ἔξ ὀρέων ἀπ' ἀνατολῶν
λέγων
Δεῦρο ἄρασαί μοι τὸν Ἰακώβ,
καὶ δεῦρο ἐπικατάρασαί μοι τὸν Ἰσραήλ.
⁸τί ἀράσομαι ὃν μὴ ἀράται κύριος,
ἢ τί καταράσομαι ὃν μὴ καταράται ὁ θεός;

23:7 And he took up his parable and said:

“Out of Mesopotamia Balak sent for me,
Moab’s king from mountains on the east, saying:
‘Come, curse Iakob for me,
and come, call down curses upon Israel for me!’
⁸How shall I curse whom the Lord does not curse?
Or how shall I call down curses on whom God does not
call down curses?

³⁶LEH “βωμός;” “θυσιαστήριον;” cf. also T. Muraoka, “βωμός,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* 92.

³⁷Cf. DJD XII, 234.

⁹ὅτι ἀπὸ κορυφῆς ὄρεων ὄψομαι αὐτόν,
καὶ ἀπὸ βουνῶν προσνοήσω αὐτόν.
ἰδοὺ λαὸς μόνος κατοικήσει,
καὶ ἐν ἔθνεσιν οὐ συλλογισθήσεται.
¹⁰τίς ἐξηκριβάσατο τὸ σπέρμα Ἰακώβ,
καὶ τίς ἐξαριθμήσεται δῆμους Ἰσραήλ;
ἀποθάνοι ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν ψυχαῖς δικαίων,
καὶ γένοιτο τὸ σπέρμα μου ὡς τὸ σπέρμα
τούτων.

⁹For from a top of mountains I shall see him,
and from hills I shall observe him.
Behold, a people shall dwell alone
and shall not be reckoned among nations!
¹⁰Who has accurately counted the offspring of Iakob,
and who shall number Israel's divisions?
May my soul die among souls of righteous ones,
and may my offspring be as their offspring!"

7: אַרם is translated by Μεσσοποταμία, a term which is most often the counterpart to מַדְיָן אַרם “Paddan-aram,” as well as אַרם נהרים. Μεσσοποταμία refers to the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Συρία/Σύρος is a much more common translation of אַרם in the LXX.³⁸

8: The translator reverses the order of the divine names, giving κύριος for אֱלֹהִים, and ὁ θεός for יְהוָה. This verse is not extant in 4QNum^b, and Sam = MT. The lines are otherwise synonymous, and no explanation is readily apparent for this variation.

10: The LXX translates עָפָר “dust,” here a metaphor for the numerous Israelites, as σπέρμα “seed, offspring.” The translator may have had in mind the divine promise to Abram that his זרע (LXX: σπέρμα) would be כַּעֲפָר הָאָרֶץ (ὡς τὴν ἄμμον τῆς γῆς).³⁹

10: δῆμους Ἰσραήλ “the people of Israel” contrasts with אַרְבַּע־יִשְׂרָאֵל, usually translated “the fourth part of Israel” (SP מְרַבְּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, not extant in the Scrolls).⁴⁰ The meaning of the Hebrew רַבַּע here is difficult. There may be a textual problem in the Hebrew, and Gray suggests emending the text to read רַבְבָּה “myriads.”⁴¹ Others have found a cognate in the Akkadian *turba'u* “dust-cloud.”⁴² Either way, the

³⁸Συρία: Jdg 3:10; 2 Sa 8:5; 10:9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19; 15:8; 1 Ki 10:29; 15:18; 19:15; 20(21):20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29; 22:1, 3, 11, 31, 35; 2 Ki 5:1, 2, 5; 6:8, 9, 11, 23, 24; 7:4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16; 8:7, 9, 13, 29; 9:14, 15; 12:18, 19; 13:3, 4, 5, 7, 17, 19, 24; 15:37; 16:5, 6, 7; 24:2; 2 Ch 1:17; 16:2, 7; 18:10, 30; 20:2; 22:5, 6; 24:23, 24; 28:5, 23; Isa 9:11; Ezek 16:57; Hos 12:13; Amos 1:5. Σύρος: Gen 22:21; 2 Sam 8:5, 6; 1 Ch 18:5; 19:10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19; Isa 17:3; Amos 9:7.

³⁹Gen 13:16. SP has מַעֲפָר, not extant in the DSS. Cf. Wevers, *NGTN*, 389-90.

⁴⁰BDB “fourth-part”, cf. *TWOT*, *Hol* “dust-cloud.”

⁴¹Gray, *Numbers*, 348.

⁴²E.g. NRSV “the dust-cloud of Israel.” Cf. Levine, *Numbers*, 175-76.

translator continues to provide a freer, contextualized translation with δῆμους Ἰσραήλ.

Balak's Response and A Second Attempt (23:11-17)

23:11 καὶ εἶπεν Βαλάκ πρὸς Βαλαάμ Τί πεποίηκάς μοι; εἰς κατάρασιν ἐχθρῶν μου κέκληκά σε, καὶ ἰδοὺ εὐλόγηκας εὐλογίαν. ¹²καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ πρὸς Βαλάκ Οὐχὶ ὅσα ἂν ἐμβάλη ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸ στόμα μου, τοῦτο φυλάξω λαλήσαι; ¹³Καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν Βαλάκ Δεῦρο ἔτι μετ' ἐμοῦ εἰς τόπον ἄλλον, ἐξ ὧν οὐκ ὄψῃ αὐτὸν ἐκεῖθεν, ἀλλ' ἢ μέρος τι αὐτοῦ ὄψῃ, πάντας δὲ οὐ μὴ ἴδῃς, καὶ κατάρασαί μοι αὐτὸν ἐκεῖθεν. ¹⁴καὶ παρέλαβεν αὐτὸν εἰς ἀγροῦ σκοπιᾶν ἐπὶ κορυφῇν λελαξευμένου, καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν ἐκεῖ ἐπτὰ βωμούς, καὶ ἀνεβίβασεν μόσχον καὶ κριὸν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμόν. ¹⁵καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ πρὸς Βαλάκ Παράστηθι ἐπὶ τῆς θυσίας σου, ἐγὼ δὲ πορεύσομαι ἐπερωτῆσαι τὸν θεόν. ¹⁶καὶ συνήντησεν ὁ θεὸς τῷ Βαλαάμ καὶ ἐνέβαλεν ῥῆμα εἰς τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν Ἀποστράφητι πρὸς Βαλάκ, καὶ τάδε λαλήσεις. ¹⁷καὶ ἀπεστράφη πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ ὅδε ἐφειστήκει ἐπὶ τῆς ὀλοκαυτώσεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄρχοντες Μωάβ μετ' αὐτοῦ. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Βαλάκ Τί ἐλάλησεν κύριος;

23:11 And Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? For cursing my enemies have I called you—and behold, you have blessed them with a blessing.” ¹² And Balaam said to Balak, “No, as much as God puts into my mouth, shall I beware of speaking it?” ¹³ And Balak said to him, “Come yet with me to another place, from there where you shall not see it; rather, some part of it you shall see, but all you shall not see. And curse it for me from there.” ¹⁴ And he took him to a look-out place of a field, on the top of Hewn. And he built there seven altars and brought up a calf and a ram on the altar. And Balaam said to Balak, “Stand beside your sacrifice, but I will go to inquire of God.” ¹⁶ And God met with Balaam, and he put a word into his mouth and said, “Turn back to Balak, and this is what you shall speak.” ¹⁷ And he turned back to him, and the latter stood beside his whole burnt offering, and all the rulers of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, “What did the Lord speak?”

12: The Hebrew begins the verse with וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר.⁴³ The translator removes any potential ambiguity by specifying the speaker and recipient.

12. Whereas the Hebrew has יְהוָה (= SP, not extant in the Scrolls), the Greek has ὁ θεός.

14: Instead of treating it as a proper name, the translator reads הַפְּסִנָּה as a form of the verbal root פָּסַן “split, cut off, cut in two” and translates as λελαξευμένου “hewn.” This equivalent occurs earlier as well, at 21:20, and appears also at Dt. 3:27 (cf. similarly Dt. 4:49 τὴν λαξευτήν). Elsewhere the LXX transliterates the Hebrew, giving Φασγα (Dt 3:17; 34:1; Jos 12:3; 13:20).

14: Balak took Balaam to שָׂדֶה צִפִּים “field of Zophim,” which the LXX translates as ἀγροῦ σκοπιᾶν “a lookout place.”

15: In the Hebrew the final phrase of v. 15 is somewhat cryptic: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶרְךָ כֶּה. The LXX, however, interprets and expands, rendering ἐγὼ δὲ πορεύσομαι ἐπερωτῆσαι τὸν θεόν.⁴⁴

⁴³MT = SP, not extant in the Scrolls.

⁴⁴Cf. 23:3 where the translator also provides a contextualized translation in a similar context.

16: The LXX has θεός as the counterpart to the MT's יהוה.⁴⁵ This may be due to the influence of 23:4, which begins with a similar phrase: ויקר אל-הים אל-בלעם.

Balaam's Second Oracle (23:18-24)

23:18 καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τὴν παραβολὴν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν

Ἀνάστηθι Βαλάκ, καὶ ἄκουε·
 ἐνώτισαι μάρτυς, υἱὸς Σεπφὼρ.
¹⁹οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ὁ θεὸς διαρτηθῆναι,
 οὐδὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀπειληθῆναι·
 αὐτὸς εἶπας οὐχὶ ποιήσει;
 λαλήσει, καὶ οὐχὶ ἐμμενεῖ;
²⁰ἰδοὺ εὐλογεῖν παρείλημμαι·
 εὐλογήσω καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀποστρέψω.
²¹οὐκ ἔσται μόχθος ἐν Ἰακώβ,
 οὐδὲ ὀφθήσεται πόνος ἐν Ἰσραήλ·
 κύριος ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ,
 τὰ ἔνδοξα ἀρχόντων ἐν αὐτῷ.
²²θεὸς ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν αὐτοὺς ἐξ Αἰγύπτου·
 ὡς δόξα μονοκέρωτος αὐτῷ.
²³οὐ γάρ ἐστιν οἰωνισμὸς ἐν Ἰακώβ,
 οὐδὲ μαντεία ἐν Ἰσραήλ·
 κατὰ καιρὸν ῥηθήσεται Ἰακώβ καὶ τῷ
 Ἰσραήλ,
 τί ἐπιτελέσει ὁ θεός.
²⁴ἰδοὺ λαὸς ὡς σκύμνος ἀναστήσεται,
 καὶ ὡς λέων γαυριωθήσεται·
 οὐ κοιμηθήσεται, ἕως ἂν φάγη θήραν,
 καὶ αἷμα τραυματιῶν πίεται.

23:18 And he took up his parable and said,

“Rise up, Balak, and hear;
 give ear as a witness, O son of Sepphor:
¹⁹God is not to be put upon like man,
 nor is he to be threatened like a son of man.
 When he himself has said, shall he not do?
 Shall he speak and not make good?
²⁰Behold, I have been taken hold of to bless;
 I will bless, and I will not turn away.
²¹There shall be no trouble in Iakob,
 nor shall hardship be seen in Israel.
 The Lord his God is with him;
 the glories of rulers are in him.
²²God was the one who brought them out of Egypt;
 like a unicorn’s glory he was to him.
²³For there is no omen in Iakob
 nor divination in Israel;
 opportunely it shall be told to Iakob and to Israel
 what God shall accomplish.
²⁴Behold, a people shall rise up like a whelp
 and shall bear itself proudly like a lion!
 It will not lie down until it eats prey
 and will drink blood of mortally wounded.”

19: The translator makes the contrast between man and God explicit, and so avoids even the hint of anthropomorphism by inserting the clarifying ὡς, with no corresponding particle in the Hebrew.⁴⁶

19: οὐδὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀπειληθῆναι· The verb here is ἀπειλέω “threaten, warn, force back” (passive: “be threatened”)—God cannot be coerced into changing his declarations. This is in contrast to the reflexive sense of the Hebrew יִתְנַחֵם “that he should repent” (JPS) or “change his mind” (NRSV).

Wevers suggests this is also an intentional avoidance of a literal translation.⁴⁷

21: The Hebrew begins לֹא־רָאָה בִּיעָקֹב “He has not beheld misfortune.” The translator abandons the

⁴⁵MT = SP, not extant in the Scrolls. A few Hebrew manuscripts agree with the LXX.

⁴⁶MT = SP, not extant in the Scrolls.

⁴⁷Wevers, *NGTN*, 394.

concept of not seeing in the first line, simply giving οὐκ ἔσται “there shall be no...”.

21: The final phrase, τὰ ἔνδοξα ἀρχόντων ἐν αὐτῷ, differs from the *Vorlage* וְהָרִיעַת מֶלֶךְ בּו.⁴⁸ The Hebrew term הָרִיעַת is difficult, and the LXX translates it variously throughout.⁴⁹ This will be discussed further in chapter 3.

22: The Hebrew has לוֹ כְּתוּעַפַת רֹאם “like the horns of a wild ox.” The translator gives what he must have considered an equivalent metaphor: ὡς δόξα μονοκέρωτος. The term תוּעַפַת appears only four times in the Hebrew Bible: in Num 23:22; 24:8 (both of these with the phrase כְּתוּעַפַת רֹאם, translated in the LXX by δόξα); in Job 22:25 (וּכְסֵף תוּעַפֹת), probably best understood as “precious silver” (NRSV, JPS),⁵⁰ where the LXX translator contextualized and rendered ἀργύριον πεπυρωμένον; and Psalm 95(94):4 (וְתוּעַפֹת הָרִים), where the LXX translator renders τὰ ὕψη τῶν ὀρέων. The term μονόκερος is the standard LXX equivalent for רֹאם,⁵¹ whose specific meaning is uncertain, but seems likely to refer to an animal like a wild ox.⁵² The significance of the translator's rendering here and at 24:8 will be discussed further in chapter 3.

23: Balaam declares that there is no נַחֲשׁ “enchantment, bewitchment” nor קֶסֶם “divination” against the people. The LXX renders οἰωνισμός “omen” (by the flight or cries of birds)⁵³ and μαντεία “oracle, prophecy.”⁵⁴ οἰωνισμός only occurs rarely in the LXX, but μαντεία appears in Deut 18:10, 14, characterized as a forbidden practice.

Balak's Response and A Third Attempt (23:25-30)

23:25 καὶ εἶπεν Βαλὰκ πρὸς Βαλαάμ Οὐτε κατάραις καταράσῃ μοι αὐτόν, οὔτε εὐλογῶν μὴ εὐλογήσῃς αὐτόν.

23:25 And Balak said to Balaam, “You shall neither curse them with curses for me, nor, when blessing, shall you bless

⁴⁸Not extant in the Scrolls, SP = MT.

⁴⁹E.g. κραυγή, σημασία, ἀλαλαγμός, etc.

⁵⁰Compare, however, the NJB's “silver piled in heaps.”

⁵¹Num 23:22; 24:8; Deu 33:17; Job 39:9; Ps 22:22; 29:6; 92:11.

⁵²Cf. BDB “רֹאם” 910.

⁵³LSJ “οἰωνισμός,” 1211.

⁵⁴LSJ “μαντεία,” 1079.

²⁶καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς Βαλαάμ εἶπεν τῷ Βαλάκ Οὐκ ἐλάλησά σοι λέγων Τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ ἂν λαλήσῃ ὁ θεός, τοῦτο ποιήσω; ²⁷Καὶ εἶπεν Βαλάκ πρὸς Βαλαάμ Δεῦρο παραλάβω σε εἰς τόπον ἄλλον, εἰ ἄρέσει τῷ θεῷ καὶ κατάρασαί μοι αὐτόν ἐκεῖθεν. ²⁸καὶ παρέλαβεν Βαλάκ τὸν Βαλαάμ ἐπὶ κορυφὴν τοῦ Φογώρ, τὸ παρατεῖνον εἰς τὴν ἔρημον. ²⁹καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ πρὸς Βαλάκ Οἰκοδόμησόν μοι ὧδε ἑπτὰ βωμούς, καὶ ἐτοίμασόν μοι ὧδε ἑπτὰ μόσχους καὶ ἑπτὰ κριούς. ³⁰καὶ ἐποίησεν Βαλάκ καθάπερ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Βαλαάμ, καὶ ἀνήνεγκεν μόσχον καὶ κριὸν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμόν.

them.” ²⁶ And Balaam answered and said to Balak, “Did I not speak to you, saying ‘The word that God speaks, this I shall do’?” ²⁷ And Balak said to Balaam, “Come, let me take you to another place, if it shall please God, and curse it for me from there.” ²⁸ And Balak took Balaam to the top of Phogor, which extends into the wilderness. ²⁹ And Balaam said to Balak, “Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven calves and seven rams.” ³⁰ And Balak did just as Balaam told him, and he offered a calf and a ram on the altar.

29: Wevers suggests that for vv. 29-30 the translator simply copied his translation of 1-2. The MT is nearly identical in verse 1 and verse 29, but verses 2 and 30 differ: verse 2 supplies the subject of the sacrificing: בלק ובלעם, whereas verse 30 omits a subject for ירעל.⁵⁵

Balaam's Third Oracle (24:1-9)

24:1 Καὶ ἰδὼν Βαλαάμ ὅτι καλὸν ἐστὶν ἔναντι κυρίου εὐλογεῖν τὸν Ἰσραήλ, οὐκ ἐπορεύθη κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς εἰς συνάντησιν τοῖς οἰωνοῖς, καὶ ἀπέστρεψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν ἔρημον. ²καὶ ἐξάρας Βαλαάμ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ καθορᾷ τὸν Ἰσραήλ ἐστρατοπεδευκὸτά κατὰ φυλάς. καὶ ἐγένετο πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, ³καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τὴν παραβολὴν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν

Φησὶν Βαλαάμ υἱὸς Βεώρ,
φησὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀληθινῶς ὁρῶν,
⁴φησὶν ἀκούων λόγια θεοῦ,
ὅστις ὅρασιν θεοῦ εἶδεν,
ἐν ὑπνῳ, ἀποκεκαλυμμένοι οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ
αὐτοῦ.
⁵Ὡς καλοὶ σου οἱ οἶκοι, Ἰακώβ,
αἱ σκηναὶ σου, Ἰσραήλ.
⁶ὥσεὶ νάπαι σκιάζουσαι,
καὶ ὥσεὶ παράδεισοι ἐπὶ ποταμῶν,
καὶ ὥσεὶ σκηναί, ὅς ἔπηξεν κύριος,
ὥσεὶ κέδροι παρ' ὕδατα.
⁷ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος
αὐτοῦ,
καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν,
καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἡ Γὼγ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ,
καὶ αὐξηθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ.
⁸ὁ θεὸς ὠδήγησεν αὐτὸν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου,
ὥς δόξα μονοκέρωτος αὐτῷ.
ἔδεται ἔθνη ἐχθρῶν αὐτοῦ,
καὶ τὰ πάχη αὐτῶν ἐκμυελιεῖ,
καὶ ταῖς βολίσιν αὐτοῦ κατατοξεύσει
ἐχθρόν.

24:1 And when Balaam saw that it was good before the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go, according to his custom, to meet the omens but turned his face toward the wilderness. ²And when Balaam raised his eyes, he looked down upon Israel encamped tribe by tribe. And a divine spirit came upon him, ³and he took up his parable and said:

“Says Balaam son of Beor;
says the man who truly sees.
⁴Says one who hears divine oracles,
who saw a divine vision,
in sleep when his eyes had been uncovered:
⁵How beautiful are your dwellings, O Iakob,
your tents, O Israel!
⁶Like wooded valleys giving shade
and like orchards by rivers
and like tents that the Lord pitched,
like cedar trees beside waters.
⁷A person will come forth from his offspring,
and he shall rule over many nations,
and reign of him shall be exalted beyond Gog,
and his reign shall be increased.
⁸A god guided him out of Egypt;
like a unicorn's glory he was to him.
He shall devour his enemies' nations
and de-marrow their stoutness
and shall shoot down an enemy with his missiles.
⁹He lay down and rested like a lion and like a whelp.
Who will raise him up?

⁵⁵Also, verse 2 has בלק whereas verse 30 has ירעל. However this difference might not be expected to be reflected in the LXX translation.

⁹κατακλιθεὶς ἀνεπαύσατο ὡς λέων καὶ ὡς
σκύμνος·
τίς ἀναστήσει αὐτόν;
οἱ εὐλογοῦντές σε εὐλόγηται,
καὶ οἱ καταρώμενοί σε κεκατήρηνται.

Blessed are those who bless you,
and cursed are those who curse you.”

1: κατὰ τὸ εἰωθός is an idiomatic rendering of the Hebrew כַּעֲשֶׂם-בַּעֲשֶׂם “as at other times.”

1: The translator gives ἀπέστρεψεν for וַיָּשָׁב, possibly reading וַיָּשׁוּב instead.⁵⁶

3: Verse 3 concludes וַיִּנָּחֵם הַגִּבּוֹר שְׁתָּם הָעֵיִן. The term שְׁתָּם “open” appears in the Hebrew Bible only at Num 24:3, 15. Some commentators suggest reading שָׁתָם “closed” instead.⁵⁷ However, this is not necessary, since one might well expect to find unusual words among the unusual diction of the Balaam pericope.⁵⁸ Wevers suggests that the translator “hedged his bets” by rendering ὁ ἀληθινῶς ὁρῶν, which is what the Hebrew metaphor presumably means.⁵⁹

4: The translator adopts θεός as the rendering for both אֵל and שֵׁרִי. Although these equivalences are acceptable, the resulting Greek text has one name for the divine whereas the Hebrew had two. The translator’s treatment of divine names will be addressed in more detail in chapter 2.

6: ἔπηξεν reflects נָחַץ, the reading attested in SP and 4QNum^b, instead of the MT’s נָחַץ.

7: The MT has אָגַג, as opposed to the LXX’s Γῶγ. The LXX reading is supported by the SP (בִּגְגִי), α' σ' θ', and possibly 4Q27.⁶⁰ In light of this textual support, it is likely that the translator’s Hebrew *Vorlage* read Gog. Although not an intentional change on the part of the translator, the use of *Gog* would convey a significantly different sense than Agag. Agag was king of the Amalekites during the reign of Saul. In the LXX, then, the reference is no longer to a historical figure in the early days of Israel’s kingship, but instead to the eschatological figure of Gog from the land of Magog described in Ezekiel 38-39. One day Israel will rise up over the great destroyer and emperor from the east. This variant will

⁵⁶SP = MT, not extant in the Scrolls.

⁵⁷BDB “שְׁתָּם,” cf. also Gray, *Numbers*, 361.

⁵⁸See Levine, *Numbers*, 191-3;

⁵⁹Wevers, *NGTN*, 402-3.

⁶⁰DJD XII, 236.

be discussed further in chapter 3.

7: The first couplet in the MT (יִזְלֶ-מִים מִדְּלִי) continues the arboreal imagery of verse 6. Israel is like trees with an abundant supply of water. The translator, however, departs from the metaphors of trees and water by translating ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ, “A person⁶¹ will come forth from his offspring.” Instead, this translation provides a subject for the following predictions of ruling over many nations and having a reign that exceeds that of Gog.

7: In the third line the translator gives βασιλεία αὐτοῦ (=מַלְכוּתוֹ), whereas the Hebrew has מַלְכוֹ.⁶² The translator of Numbers, as well as the translator of Deuteronomy, avoids the term βασιλεύς when referring to Israelite rulers.⁶³

8: ὠδήγησεν reflects the SP's נִחְהוּ, rather than the MT's מוֹצִיא.

8: In the final phrase the MT lacks an object. The LXX supplies ἐχθρόν, which may be supported by 4QNum^b, where the editor reconstructs אֹיִב.⁶⁴

8: The LXX renders the Hebrew לֹא כְתוּבָה רָאָם לִי with ὥς δόξα μονοκέρωτος αὐτῷ. See the discussion above at 23:22.

Balak Commands Balaam To Leave (24:10-14)

24:10 καὶ ἐθυμώθη Βαλὰκ ἐπὶ Βαλαάμ, καὶ συνεκρότησεν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἶπεν Βαλὰκ πρὸς Βαλαάμ Καταράσθαι τὸν ἐχθρόν μου κέκληκά σε, καὶ ἰδοὺ εὐλογῶν εὐλόγησας τρίτον τοῦτο. ¹¹νῦν οὖν φεῦγε εἰς τὸν τόπον σου· εἶπα Τιμήσω σε, καὶ νῦν ἐστέρησέν σε κύριος τῆς δόξης. ¹²καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ πρὸς Βαλὰκ Οὐχὶ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις σου, οὓς ἀπέστειλας πρὸς με, ἐλάλησα λέγων ¹³Ἐάν μοι δῶ Βαλὰκ πλήρη τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ ἀργυρίου καὶ χρυσίου, οὐ δυνήσομαι παραβῆναι τὸ ῥῆμα κυρίου ποιῆσαι αὐτὸ πονηρὸν ἢ καλὸν παρ' ἐμαυτοῦ· ὅσα ἂν εἴπῃ ὁ θεός, ταῦτα ἐρῶ; ¹⁴καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ ἀποτρέχω εἰς τὸν τόπον μου· δεῦρο συμβουλευέσω σοι, τί ποιήσει ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τὸν λαόν σου ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν.

24:10 And Balak became infuriated with Balaam, and he clapped his hands together. And Balak said to Balaam, “I have summoned you to curse my enemy, and behold, in blessing you have blessed him this third time. ¹¹Now then be off to your place! I said, ‘I will honor you,’ but now the Lord has deprived you of glory.” ¹²And Balaam said to Balak, “No, even to your messengers whom you sent to me I spoke, saying, ¹³If Balak gives me his house full of silver and gold, I will not be able to transgress the word of the Lord to do it, bad or good, of my own accord; whatever God says, that I will speak.’ ¹⁴And now, behold, I am going off to my place; come, let me advise you what this people will do to your people at the end of days.”

⁶¹NETS renders “person.”

⁶²Compare the following line, where the translator renders מַלְכוּתוֹ with ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ.

⁶³Wevers, “The LXX Translator of Deuteronomy,” 87.

⁶⁴Ibid.

13: ὅσα ἂν εἴπῃ ὁ θεός. In contrast, the MT has יהוה for the divine name.

14: εἰς τὸν τόπον μου is probably the result of harmonization with εἰς τὸν τόπον σου in v.

11, against the MT's לעמי (= SP).

Balaam's Fourth Oracle (24:15-19)

24:15 Καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τὴν παραβολὴν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν

Φησὶν Βαλαὰμ υἱὸς Βεὼρ,
φησὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀληθινῶς ὁρῶν,
¹⁶ἀκούων λόγια θεοῦ,
ἐπιστάμενος ἐπιστήμην παρὰ ὑψίστου,
καὶ ὁρασὶν θεοῦ ἰδὼν,
ἐν ὕπνῳ ἀποκεκαλυμμένοι οἱ
ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ·
¹⁷Δεῖξω αὐτῷ, καὶ οὐχὶ νῦν·
μακαρίζω, καὶ οὐκ ἐγγίξει·
ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ἰακώβ,
καὶ ἀναστήσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ,
καὶ θραύσει τοὺς ἀρχηγοὺς Μωάβ,
καὶ προνομεύσει πάντας υἱοὺς Σήθ.
¹⁸καὶ ἔσται Ἐδὼμ κληρονομία,
καὶ ἔσται κληρονομία Ἡσαὺ ὁ ἐχθρὸς
αὐτοῦ·
καὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἐποίησεν ἐν ἰσχύϊ.
¹⁹καὶ ἐξεγερθήσεται ἐξ Ἰακώβ,
καὶ ἀπολεῖ σωζόμενον ἐκ πόλεως.

24:15 And he took up his parable and said:

“Says Balaam son of Beor;
says the man who truly sees,
¹⁶one who hears divine oracles,
one who understands knowledge of the Most High
and one who sees a divine vision,
in sleep when his eyes had been uncovered:
¹⁷I will point to him, and not now;
I deem him happy, but he is not at hand.
A star shall dawn out of Iakob,
and a person shall rise up out of Israel,
and he shall crush the chiefs of Moab,
and he shall plunder all Seth’s sons.
¹⁸And Edom will be an inheritance,
and Esau, his enemy, will be an inheritance,
and Israel acted with strength.
¹⁹And one shall arise out of Iakob,
and he shall destroy one being saved from a city.”

15: Verse 15 is an exact copy of v. 3 in both the Greek and Hebrew versions.

17: The translator misread אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ as from the verbal root אָשַׁר, “be happy” instead of שׁוּר “gaze, see.”

The same consonantal form, אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ, appeared in 23:9, where the translator gave the correct translation.

17: The Hebrew פִּאֲדֵי and קִרְקֵר posed a challenge for the translator. פִּאֲדֵי carries the sense of “side, edge” or “temple” (of the head), for which the translator chose τοὺς ἀρχηγούς “leaders.” The Hebrew term קִרְקֵר is problematic. Although it is possibly a form of קָרַר “break down,”⁶⁵ a much more likely explanation is that it is an error; the editor of *BHS* proposes קִדְקֵד “head, crown of head.” The translator renders προνομεύσει, “plunder.” The Targumim also had difficulty with these terms, and provided

⁶⁵Cf. מִקְרָקֵר at Isa 22:5, although as a hapax legomenon its meaning is uncertain.

contextual readings as well.

17: The LXX gives ἄνθρωπος for the Hebrew שׁבט (= SP). This variant will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.

Concluding Oracles (24:20-25)

24:20 καὶ ἰδὼν τὸν Ἀμαλήκ καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τὴν παραβολὴν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν

Ἀρχὴ ἐθνῶν Ἀμαλήκ,
καὶ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτῶν ἀπολεῖται.

²¹καὶ ἰδὼν τὸν Καϊναῖον καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τὴν παραβολὴν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν

Ἰσχυρὰ ἡ κατοικία σου·
καὶ ἐὰν θῇς ἐν πέτρᾳ τὴν νοσσιάν σου,
²²καὶ ἐὰν γένηται τῷ Βεὼρ νοσσιὰ
πανουργίας,
Ἀσσύριοι σε αἰχμαλωτεύσουσιν.

²³καὶ ἰδὼν τὸν Ὠγ καὶ ἀναλαβὼν τὴν παραβολὴν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν

Ὠ ὦ, τίς ζήσεται, ὅταν θῇ ταῦτα ὁ θεός;
²⁴καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ἐκ χειρὸς Κιτιαίων,
καὶ κακώσουσιν Ἀσσοὺρ,
καὶ κακώσουσιν Ἑβραίους,
καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἀπολοῦνται.

²⁵καὶ ἀναστὰς Βαλαάμ ἀπῆλθεν ἀποστραφεὶς εἰς τὸν
τόπον αὐτοῦ, καὶ Βαλάκ ἀπῆλθεν πρὸς ἑαυτόν.

24:20 And when he saw Amalek and took up his parable, he said:

“Rule of nations is Amalek,
but their offspring will perish.”

²¹And when he saw the Kenite and took up his parable, he said:

“Strong is your dwelling place;
even if you set your nest in a rock,
²²even if a nest of cleverness accrues to Beor,
Assyrians shall take you away captive.”

²³And when he saw Og and took up his parable, he said:

“Alas, alas, who shall live when God ordains these things?
²⁴And one shall go forth from the hand of Kitieans,
and they shall harm Assour, and they shall harm Ebreans,
and they too shall perish together.”

²⁵And Balaam got up and went away as he returned to his place; Balak too went home.

24: The phrase καὶ ἐξελεύσεται probably represents וַיֵּצֵא, rather than the MT’s וַיֵּצֵא “ships.”

3. Conclusion

Although the LXX can be said to generally follow the Hebrew majority text, there are multiple instances where it agrees with other texts against the MT. For example, at 22:9 τί follows מה in the SP against the MT’s מי. In 23:3b the LXX contains several lines absent in the MT and SP, but present in 4Q27. Although some LXX variants can be explained with recourse to the Samaritan text or the Scrolls,

many of the major LXX variants have no extant Hebrew support. The LXX's preference for θεός has no precedent in extant Hebrew texts. Neither does the LXX translation of 24:7, and the reading ἄνθρωπος in 24:17.

The translation character of the LXX Numbers 22-24 is not especially uncharacteristic of LXX Numbers, nor of the LXX Pentateuch in general. The translator gives a generally isomorphic translation where, within the constraints of the target language, each Hebrew morpheme is represented by one equivalent Greek morpheme.⁶⁶ The translation is guilty of errors (possibly misreading מים at 24:7; אראו at 24:17), ignorance (of proper names, e.g. שדה צפים and הפסגה at 23:14), inconsistency and variation in translation (as in the different terms used for the emissaries of Balak in ch. 22, for נכה in ch. 22, and קבב and ארר in chs. 22-23), as well as awkwardness (e.g. προστίθημι for יסף in 22:15, 19, 25, 26). All these characteristics have precedent in the other books of the LXX Pentateuch. Less expected, however, are the elements singled out for further study, the use of κύριος and θεός, and the reworking of elements of Balaam's oracles with eschatological or messianic significance, especially in 23:21, 24:7, and 24:17.

⁶⁶Even in translations that are widely considered anomalous, see e.g. the discussion of 24:7 in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DIVINE NAME IN THE LXX BALAAM ACCOUNT

Chapter Synopsis: This chapter examines the translator's substitution of θεός for יהוה in the Balaam account in the light of its context in the Septuagint version of Numbers, the LXX Pentateuch, and contemporary literary context. I argue that this tendency reflects the translator's intentional attempt to influence the reader's perception of the interaction of God and Balaam.

1. Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the translation of the divine name in Numbers 22-24 departs from the usual approach taken in the LXX of giving κύριος for יהוה and θεός for אלהים. The translator followed this practice throughout most of Numbers, but radically departs from it in his translation of the Balaam account, frequently rendering יהוה with θεός.⁶⁷ Although some variation in lexical equivalents is normal in the LXX, the sudden appearance of numerous θεός - יהוה equivalences raises questions about the translator's approach to translation and his interpretation of the Balaam account. The following tables summarize the translation of the divine name in Numbers and in the Balaam account:

The Divine Name in the Book of Numbers ⁶⁸							
	יהוה	אלהים	אל	אדון	שדי	Other	Total
κύριος	369	-	1 ⁶⁹	7	-	18 ⁷⁰	395
θεός	24 ⁷¹	24	9	-	2	3 ⁷²	62
Other	3 ⁷³	3 ⁷⁴	-	-	-		
Total	396	27	10	7	2 ⁷⁵		

⁶⁷in all but one instance in the narrative portions.

⁶⁸Statistics for the Hebrew reflect the MT. I have footnoted evidence from the Samaritan text and the Scrolls where appropriate.

⁶⁹At 23:8.

⁷⁰The translator gives πρὸς τὸν κύριον ὑμῶν for אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָצְכֶם at 22:13. κύριος appears without a clear Hebrew antecedent at 3:16; 5:9; 6:21, 6:24(27); 7:89; 8:13, 15; 10:36(34); 15:5, 14(15); 16:22, 20:9, 16; 21:7; 29:11; 31:3; 32:30.

⁷¹At 9:19, 15:30, 16:5, 11; 22:13, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31(2x), 32, 35; 23:3, 5, 8, 12, 16, 26; 24:13; 31:41. In nearly all of these cases MT = SP, except for 23:3 and 23:6, where the SP agrees with the LXX against MT. At 24:13 both MT and SP have the tetragrammaton, but SP also has אֱלִי, not present in the MT. The Scrolls are unfortunately fragmentary at chapters 22-24, but 4Q27 supports the MT at 22:13, and the SP against the MT at 23:3.

⁷²The Greek has phrases with no Hebrew equivalent at 23:3, 6, 15.

The Divine Name in the Balaam Account (chs. 22-24)							
	יהוה	אלהים	אל	אדון	שדי	Other	Total
κύριος	10	-	1	-	-	1 ⁷⁶	12
θεός	19	11	7	-	2	3 ⁷⁷	42
Other	-	-	-	-	-		
Total	29	11	8	-	2		

In Numbers overall, θεός translates יהוה approximately 6% of the time.⁷⁸ In chapters 22-24, nearly 66% of the occurrences of יהוה are rendered by θεός. What accounts for this radical change? The Balaam account is a distinct literary unit in Numbers. Furthermore Balaam, is a pagan seer who communicates with God, is hired to curse Israel, but blesses Israel instead, although ultimately he aids Moab in the corruption of Israel. He therefore poses an interpretive challenge to readers of this text. Is Balaam a righteous prophet or a corrupt seer? Does he really hear from and speak for God? This literary and theological context likely influenced the translator's treatment of the divine names in the Balaam account.

Studies of LXX translation practice rightly begin with an examination of the text-critical issues. In this case the evidence of the transmission of the text and what we know of usual scribal practice do not provide an explanation of the frequent use of θεός for יהוה. Therefore, it seems appropriate to posit a literary or theological motivation for this aspect of the translation.

Martin Rösel has made perhaps the most broad-ranging proposal about a theologically motivated use of the divine name in the LXX.⁷⁹ He argues that textual criticism and scribal practice fail to explain

⁷³The tetragrammaton has no Greek equivalent at 5:6 and 31:3; at 10:36(34) the translator takes יהוה as a verbal form.

⁷⁴The translation lacks an equivalent for אלהים at Numbers 10:9, and two occurrences of אלהים are translated by εἰδωλον, at 25:5(2x).

⁷⁵At 24:4, 16.

⁷⁶The translator gives πρὸς τὸν κύριον ὑμῶν for אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָצְכֶם at 22:13.

⁷⁷The Greek has phrases with no Hebrew equivalent at 23:3, 6, 15.

⁷⁸If we were to exclude chapters 22-24 from this overall picture, we would see 5 instances of θεός for יהוה, representing approximately 1.8% of the 267 total occurrences of יהוה.

⁷⁹Martin Rösel, "The Reading and Translation of the Divine Name in the Masoretic Tradition and the Greek Pentateuch," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 411-28.

the LXX treatment of the divine name. Instead, deviations from the standard translation equivalents can best be explained exegetically. In nearly all cases, contextual factors are determinative. Therefore, Rösel asserts, “one can also glimpse the translator's theological thinking in his use of the names of God in the Greek Pentateuch.”⁸⁰

Rösel proposes several contexts in which the θεός for יהוה (and less commonly—κύριος for אלהים) occurs. One such category is that of judgment or punishment. For example, in Genesis 12:17 θεός (יהוה) afflicts Pharaoh and his house with plagues. In Gen 38:7 we are told that Er was sinful before κύριος (יהוה) but that θεός (יהוה) killed him. In Genesis 6:6 θεός (יהוה) ponders that he made humankind, and in 6:7 θεός (יהוה) declares that he will wipe them out. In Exodus 16:7 Moses and Aaron tell the Israelites that they will see the glory of κύριος (יהוה), for he has heard their complaining against θεός (יהוה).⁸¹

Another category Rösel suggests is in connection with foreigners.⁸² In Gen 13:13, we are told the men of Sodom are sinful against θεός (יהוה). In Gen 30:27, Laban declares that θεός (יהוה) has blessed him because of Jacob, and in 31:49 Laban calls θεός (יהוה) to enforce the covenant between Laban and Jacob. In Exod 3:18, יהוה אלהים becomes θεός in Moses' declaration to Pharaoh—the God of the Hebrews should not be identified as “Lord” to non-Israelites.⁸³ Rösel suggests that the avoidance of κύριος when Balaam is addressed in Num 22-24 is motivated by this same tendency.

A tendency towards the use of θεός also appears in contexts involving displays of God's power. In Gen 18:13-14, κύριος asks Abraham if anything is impossible with θεός (יהוה). Similarly, in Exodus 13:21 it is θεός (יהוה) who leads by pillar and cloud. In a similar context, the LXX version of the

⁸⁰Rösel, “Reading and Translation,” 419.

⁸¹Other examples Rösel gives of θεός for יהוה in contexts of judgment/punishment include Num 16:5, 11; Deut 2.14, as well as different forms of the divine name in Genesis 4.

⁸²Rösel, “Reading and Translation,” 421-2.

⁸³Rösel also cites Exod 5:2-3; 10:11 as examples of this tendency. (“Reading and Translation,” 421.).

theophany account in Exodus 19 shows a decided preference for θεός.

Rösel also observes that the translators sometimes employed the name κύριος for other theological reasons. He cites Gen 50:25, where the translator gives κύριος for אלהים because, he suggests, the context has to do with a promise that κύριος will visit Israel (cf. Exod 13:19).⁸⁴ Rösel argues that this tendency can also be found in the Hebrew text. He cites Donald W. Parry's study of 4QSam^a, in which Parry observes that 4QSam^a uses יהוה more frequently than the MT and suggests that this frequency of use signals the scribe's belief that יהוה is actively involved in the life of Israel.⁸⁵ This suggests that the practice of emphasizing one divine name over another may have its origin prior to the creation of the LXX.

Rösel adds that the scribe of 4QSam^a appears to avoid using the tetragrammaton in contexts that go against the view of יהוה as merciful.⁸⁶ In the narrative that describes God killing David and Bathsheba's first son (2 Sam 12:15), the MT has יהוה and 4QSam^a has אלהים.

Rösel provides a plausible theoretical argument for theologically motivated substitutions of θεός for יהוה in the LXX. Absent from his essay, however, is any discussion of the textual background of the examples he cites. Do any of these cases have a textual basis? Furthermore, Rösel's thesis suffers from an over-reliance on isolated instances of θεός for יהוה which could easily be a result of the apparently random textual variation that occasionally occurs in the transmission of Hebrew and Greek texts. Except for the Balaam account, none of Rösel's examples have enough θεός / יהוה equivalences to be considered a pattern. Numerous counter-examples exist as well. The LXX often gives κύριος in cases

⁸⁴Ibid., 422.

⁸⁵Donald W. Parry, "4QSam^a and the Tetragrammaton," in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. D. W. Parry and S. D. Ricks; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 106-25. Cf. also Donald W. Parry, "Notes on Divine Name Avoidance in Scriptural Units of the Legal Texts of Qumran," *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Cambridge 1995, Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten* (ed. Moshe Bernstein, Florentino Garcia Martinez, and John Kampen; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 437-49.

⁸⁶Rösel, "Reading and Translation," 423.

of judgment, in contexts with foreigners, and in displays of divine power.⁸⁷ In the overwhelming majority of cases, the LXX translators simply give the standard equivalent for יהוה or אלהים irrespective of context.

Rösel's thesis would be more convincing if he could point to a discernible pattern of divine name substitution. One or two occasions of θεός for יהוה (or κύριος for אלהים) could simply be examples of random variation. Groups of these occurrences, however, could make random variation a less likely explanation and provide a broader base of context for interpretation. This chapter begins, therefore, by examining every instance of θεός for יהוה in Numbers, with a particular eye for contextual elements that may have influenced the translator's rendering.

2. θεός for יהוה in Numbers

2.1. Outside of the Balaam Account.

Outside of Numbers 22-24, the translation θεός for יהוה occurs only five times: 9:19; 15:30; 16:5, 11; and 31:41. These are discussed below.

Num 9:19 MT: ושמרו בני־ישראל את־משמרת יהוה (SP)

LXX: καὶ φυλάξονται οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ τὴν φυλακὴν τοῦ θεοῦ

The Greek text, with the future verb φυλάξονται, reads like an instruction, whereas the Hebrew is straightforward narrative. In 9:19 the narrator tells us that the Israelites kept the command of God by remaining where they were camped while the cloud stayed over the tabernacle. κύριος is frequently used in the surrounding context, and it is unclear why the translator preferred θεός here. One Greek witness gives κύριος: manuscript 129, supported by Aeth Arm Bo. That κύριος is secondary is indicated by the paucity of witnesses, and can be accounted for on the basis of the surrounding context.

⁸⁷Eg. Numbers 16; Genesis 19:24; Exodus 8.

Verse 23 has τὴν φυλακὴν κυρίου, and προστάγματος κυρίου appears several times in the nearby verses.

Num 15:30 MT: אֶת־יְהוָה הוּא מַגְדִּי (SP)
LXX: τὸν θεὸν οὗτος παροξύνει

The context here concerns regulations about offerings for sin. Different regulations exist for different offenses. Verses 30-31 describe the person who παροξύνει (“provokes”) God. No offering exists for him; he is to be cut off from the people of God. In this case, there may be a syntactical explanation. Wevers points out that the translator usually represents the direct object marker אֶת with τὸν. This presents a problem to the translator in the present context, because he usually employs the phrase τὸν κύριον to render אֶת אֲדֹנָי.⁸⁸ In order to avoid this, the translator gives θεός. The translator also uses παροξύνω, “provoke, irritate,” which Wevers suggests is a weaker word than גָּדַף “blaspheme,” resulting in a milder condemnation.⁸⁹ Instead of blaspheming Yahweh, the individual is guilty of merely a “provocation of deity.”⁹⁰ However, one should be cautious of comparing the relative strength of Greek and Hebrew terms, and it is not completely clear whether the translated text was an intentional avoidance of κύριος by the translator, or an attempt to preserve translation equivalents he had established earlier.

Num 16:5 MT: בָּקֶר וַיַּדַּע יְהוָה אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־לּוֹ (SP)
LXX: Ἐπέσκεπται καὶ ἔγνω ὁ θεὸς τοὺς ὄντας αὐτοῦ

Num 16:11 MT: לָכֵן אַתָּה וְכָל־עַדְתְּךָ הַנִּעַדִּים עַל־יְהוָה (SP)
LXX: οὕτως σὺ καὶ πᾶσα ἡ συναγωγὴ σου ἡ συνηθροισμένη πρὸς τὸν θεόν

⁸⁸Wevers, *NGTN*, 251.

⁸⁹παροξύνω appears for גָּדַף in one other case in the LXX, at Isa 37:23, where the translator renders τίνα ὠνεΐδισας καὶ παρώξυνας for אֶת־מִי חָרַפְתָּ וְגַדַּפְתָּ. The term גָּדַף is itself relatively rare, occurring only 7 times in the Hebrew Bible.

⁹⁰Wevers, *NGTN*, 250-1.

Numbers 16 describes the rebellion of Korah, who leads a group of Israelites who protest that they too should be able to perform the duties of the tabernacle. God rejects the offering of Korah and his men, and the earth opens up and swallows them. In 16:5, the translator takes the text in a somewhat different direction than the Hebrew. In the Hebrew, Moses tells Korah, “In the morning the LORD will make known who is his, and who is holy, and who will be allowed to approach him; the one whom he will choose he will allow to approach him.” The Greek translates the imperfect Hebrew verb with a perfect, with the result that Moses says, “God (ὁ θεός) has enrolled, and he recognized the ones who are his and who are holy, and he brought them to himself, and those whom he chose for himself he brought to himself” (NETS). In the LXX, God has already judged the ones who belong to him: those who are holy and obedient.

In 16:11a Moses tells Korah, “Thus are you and all your congregation that has gathered together against God (ἡ συνηθροισμένη πρὸς τὸν θεόν).”⁹¹ Συναθροίζω, “gather together,” is an acceptable counterpart to the Niphal of יעד, “gather.”⁹² The sense of the verse is similar to that of 15:30, discussed above. However, the Hebrew has no direct object marker, and thus there is no readily apparent syntactical reason for the translator's choice of θεός.

A few witnesses give κύριος instead of θεός in 16:5, 11, and Wevers concludes that κύριος is an early correction.⁹³ Any reason for the substitution of θεός in Numbers 16 is unclear from the text, and in nearby contexts κύριος often appears for יהוה, e.g. in vv. 7, 17, 30, 35.

Num 31:41 MT: ויתן משה את־מכס תרומת יהוה לאלעזר הכהן כאשר צוה יהוה את־משה (SP)

LXX: καὶ ἔδωκεν Μωυσῆς τὸ τέλος κυρίῳ τὸ ἀφαίρεμα τοῦ θεοῦ Ἐλεαζάρ τῷ ἱερεῖ,

⁹¹ The reading κύριος is supported in the Greek by 426, and in other witnesses ^{Lat}cod 100, Aeth, and Sa.

⁹² This is the only instance in the LXX where יעד is translated by συναθροίζω. The translator renders יעד by ἐπισυνίστημι at 14:35; 27:3; προσέρχομαι at 10:4; συνάγω at 10:3. At Numbers 17:19 the translator gives γνωσθήσομαι for איעד, this equivalence also occurs in Exodus at 25:22; 29:42; 30:6, 36.

⁹³ Wevers, *NGTN*, 261.

καθὰ συνέταξεν κύριος τῷ Μωϋσῇ.

The translator has added κυρίῳ (without a counterpart in MT, SP) and given τὸ ἀφαίρεμα τοῦ θεοῦ for יהוה.⁹⁴ Unlike the other occasions discussed above, this occurs in a positive context. Since he has added κυρίῳ, probably to harmonize with other occurrences of τὸ τέλος κυρίῳ (31:37, 38, 39), it is possible he chose to use θεός for sake of variety. Wevers suggests that since the translator has added κυρίῳ, the use of θεός avoids the possible perception of a repeated יהוה in the parent text, although it is unclear why this would be considered a problem.⁹⁵

2.2. The Divine Name in the Balaam Account

Num 22:13 MT: כי מאן יהוה לתתי להלך עמכם: (SP, 4Q27)⁹⁶
LXX: οὐκ ἀφίησίν με ὁ θεὸς πορεύεσθαι μεθ' ὑμῶν

Balaam tells the messengers to return to their own land, for “ὁ θεός will not allow me to go with you.” The Hebrew has יהוה. The translator may have been influenced by the previous verse, where it is אלהים/θεός who speaks to Balaam. In the LXX Balaam tells the messengers to return πρὸς τὸν κύριον ὑμῶν, probably following a Hebrew text similar to 4Q27, which (reconstructed) reads [לכו א] [אֲדֹנָיִם כְּמֹה].

Most of the occurrences of θεός for יהוה appear in Balaam's encounter with the Angel of God:

	LXX	MT (SP) ⁹⁷
22:22 ⁹⁸	καὶ ἀνέστη ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνδιαβάλλειν αὐτόν	וַיִּתְּצַב מִלֶּאךָּ יְהוָה בְּדֶרֶךְ לִשְׁטָן לּוֹ
22:23	καὶ ἰδοῦσα ἡ ὄνος τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ	וַתֵּרָא הָאִתּוֹן אֶת־מִלֶּאךָּ יְהוָה

⁹⁴Some minor witnesses (16, 46, 551, Aeth, and Syh) give κυρίου instead of θεοῦ.

⁹⁵Wevers, *NTGN*, 521.

⁹⁶Witnesses included in parentheses indicate that they agree in the particular divine name although there may be slight differences in phrasing.

⁹⁷In all these cases SP = MT, with respect to the divine name used. The Qumran scrolls are unfortunately very fragmentary in this section.

⁹⁸The SP contains a variant in the divine name earlier in the verse, where it reads יהוה אף ויחר against the MT's אלהים (= LXX).

22:24	καὶ ἔσται ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ταῖς αὐλάξιν τῶν ἀμπέλων	ויעמד מלאך יהוה במשעול הכרמים
22:25	καὶ ἰδοῦσα ἡ ὄνος τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ	ותרא האתון את-מלאך יהוה
22:26	καὶ προσέθετο ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ	ויוסף מלאך-יהוה עבור
22:27	καὶ ἰδοῦσα ἡ ὄνος τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ	ותרא האתון את-מלאך יהוה
22:28	καὶ ἤνοιξεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ στόμα τῆς ὄνου	ויפתח יהוה את-פי האתון
22:31	ἀπεκάλυψεν δὲ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς Βαλαάμ	ויגל יהוה את-עיני בלעם
22:31	καὶ ὁρᾷ τὸν ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ	וירא את-מלאך יהוה
22:32	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ	ויאמר אליו מלאך יהוה
22:34	καὶ εἶπεν Βαλαάμ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ κυρίου	ויאמר בלעם אל-מלאך יהוה
22:35	καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς Βαλαάμ	ויאמר מלאך יהוה אל-בלעם

An angel blocks Balaam's way. In the Hebrew this is מלאך יהוה, but the LXX gives ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ. Although less common than ἄγγελος κυρίου, ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ does occur throughout the LXX, with no significant distinction from ἄγγελος κυρίου.⁹⁹ The replacement of מלאך יהוה with ἄγγελος θεοῦ occurs in 22:22,¹⁰⁰ 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31,¹⁰¹ 32, and 35, the only exception occurring in v. 34. Wevers suggests that this exception is due to Balaam's repentance. In addition, θεός replaces יהוה in vv. 28 and 31, where one reads that ὁ θεός opens the mouth of the donkey and uncovers Balaam's eyes.

Num 23:3 MT: אולי יקרה יהוה לקראתי
LXX: εἴ μοι φανεῖται ὁ θεὸς ἐν συναντήσῃ (SP 4Q27)¹⁰²

In the MT Balaam anticipates the appearance of יהוה, but in the LXX Balaam seeks the appearance of ὁ θεός. The agreement of SP and 4Q27 suggests the LXX is following a Hebrew *Vorlage*. After Balaam departs to go with Balak, the language of divine interaction with Balaam is

⁹⁹E.g. Gen 21:17, 28:12 31.11, 32:2; Exod 14:19; Deut 32:8, 43.

¹⁰⁰The MT, supported by the LXX, gives אף אלהים. The SP, supported by a number of other witnesses, reads אף יהוה. Wevers suggests that SP may represent the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX, since LXX exhibits a marked preference for θεός ("The Balaam Narrative," 139).

¹⁰¹Here only Rahlfs disagrees with the Göttingen edition, giving τὸν ἄγγελον κυρίου.

¹⁰²SP gives אולי יקרא אלהים לקראתי. Similarly, 4Q27, although fragmentary, appears to follow the MT wording but has אלהים instead of יהוה.

almost exclusively in terms of θεός. In 22:8 and 22:19, Balaam expects κύριος to tell him what to do, but after his decision to go to Balak, he inquires of and hears only from ó θεός.

Num 23:3 4Q27: [וַיִּתְּצַב בַּלַּק עַל עַ[ו]לָתוֹ וּבַלְעָם (> MT SP)
LXX: καὶ παρέστη Βαλάκ ἐπὶ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ, καὶ Βαλαάμ ἐπορεύθη ἐπερωτῆσαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἐπορεύθη εὐθεΐαν (4Q27)

The LXX, supported by 4Q27, includes a line missing in the MT and SP texts. The editor of 4Q27 reconstructs אֱלֹהִים.¹⁰³

Num 23:5 MT: וַיִּשֶׁם יְהוָה דְּבַר בְּפִי בַלְעָם (SP מִלֶּאךְ יְהוָה, not extant in the DSS)
LXX: καὶ ἐνέβαλεν ó θεὸς ῥῆμα εἰς τὸ στόμα Βαλαάμ

In the LXX ó θεός places the word in Balaam's mouth. There is some variation in the Hebrew sources here: in verse 4 the SP and 4Q27 give מִלֶּאךְ אֱלֹהִים against the MT's אֱלֹהִים, and in verse 5 the SP again has יְהוָה against the MT (not extant in the Scrolls).

Num 23:7 not extant in the MT, SP, DSS
LXX: καὶ ἐγενήθη πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπ' αὐτῷ,

The LXX includes this phrase which is not found in any extant Hebrew witnesses. A similar phrase, καὶ ἐγένετο πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, appears in 24:2, supported by MT, SP, 4Q27.

Num 23:8a MT: מַה אֶקְבַּל לֹא קָבַח אֵל (SP, not extant in the DSS)
LXX: τί ἀράσομαι ὃν μὴ ἀρᾶται κύριος,

Num 23:8b MT: וּמַה אֶזְעַם לֹא זָעַם יְהוָה (SP, not extant in the DSS)
LXX: ἢ τί καταράσομαι ὃν μὴ καταρᾶται ó θεός;

In 23:8 the divine names are reversed. Balaam declares, “How can I curse the one whom the κύριος (אֵל) has not cursed, or how can I denounce the one whom ó θεός (יהוָה) has not denounced?”

¹⁰³DJD XII, 234-5.

The phrases are synonymous, and there is no apparent reason why the translator would have intentionally departed from his source text. Furthermore, textual witnesses are divided between κύριος and θεός in the first line, suggesting that the translator simply followed the Hebrew text that was in front of him.¹⁰⁴

Num 23:12 MT: הלא את אשר ישם יהוה בפי אתו אשמר לדבר (SP, not extant in the scrolls)
LXX: Οὐχὶ ὅσα ἂν ἐμβάλη ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸ στόμα μου, τοῦτο φυλάξω λαλήσαι;

After the first oracle and Balak's response, Balaam declares that he will surely speak what ὁ θεός gives him to speak.

Num 23:15 MT: ואנכי אקרה כה (SP, not extant in Scrolls)
LXX: ἐγὼ δὲ πορεύσομαι ἐπερωτῆσαι τὸν θεόν.

The Hebrew text is somewhat abrupt, and the translator provides a sensible paraphrase.

Num 23:16 MT: ויקרא מלאך יהוה אל בלעם (SP ויקרא מלאך יהוה אל בלעם, not extant in Scrolls)
LXX: καὶ συνήγτησεν ὁ θεὸς τῷ Βαλαάμ

ὁ θεός meets Balaam and gives him another message to speak. The SP supplies מלאך יהוה. The SP also includes מלאך at 23:4, 5.

Num 23:26 MT: כל אשר ידבר יהוה אתו אעשה (not extant in the Scrolls)
LXX: Τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ ἂν λαλήσῃ ὁ θεός, τοῦτο ποιήσω; (SP כל הדבר אשר ידבר האלהים אתו (אעשה)

Balaam reaffirms that he will do whatever ὁ θεός tells him. Although the SP usually agrees with the MT in its use of either יהוה or אלהים, here it agrees with the LXX.

Num 24:4 MT: אשר מחזה שרי יהוה (SP, not extant in the Scrolls)
LXX: ὅστις ὄρασιν θεοῦ εἶδεν

¹⁰⁴Wevers, *Numeri*, 280-1.

In the Pentateuch **שדי** usually appears as part of the compound **אל שדי**. The LXX translators, uncertain about the etymology of **שדי**, usually contextualized by giving **θεός**, often with the pronoun **μου** or **σου**, depending on the context.¹⁰⁵ The translator lacks a pronoun here and at 24:16, possibly because he thought it unnecessary, but compare the absence of the pronoun “my” in 22:18: **κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ** for **יהוה אלהי**. Although far from certain, these renderings may point to the translator's discomfort with Balaam referring to **κύριος** as “my God.”

Num 24:13 MT: **אשר ידבר יהוה אתו אדבר** (SP, not extant in the Scrolls)

LXX: ὅσα ἂν εἴπῃ ὁ θεός, ταῦτα ἐρῶ;

In 24:13 Balaam repeats that he will speak whatever **ὁ θεός** (for **יהוה**) speaks.

Num 24:16 MT: **מחזה שדי יהוה** (SP, not extant in the Scrolls)

LXX: καὶ ὄρασιν θεοῦ ἰδών

Here, as in the similar phrase in 24:4, the translator gives **θεός** for **שדי**.

2.3. Summary

Although throughout the book of Numbers the translator generally adheres to the usual LXX equivalents for divine names, here he frequently gives **θεός** instead of **κύριος**. This is not a wholesale avoidance of **κύριος**, since in the narrative sections **κύριος** does appear for **יהוה** in 22:8, 18, 19, 34; 23:8, 17; 24:1, 11. Balaam and Balak speak of **κύριος** communicating to Balaam (22:8, 18, 19; 23:17; 24:13), however the translation never allows **κύριος** to speak to or directly interact with Balaam. Instead of the MT's angel of **יהוה**, Balaam encounters the “angel of God.” The appearance of **ἄγγελος κυρίου** at 22:34 may be the exception that proves the rule.

¹⁰⁵Cf. Robert J. V. Hiebert, “The Hermeneutics of Translation in the Septuagint of Genesis,” in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (ed. Wolfgang Kraus and Glenn Wooden; SBLSCS 53; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 93-95. Cf. also Wevers, *NGTE*, 73.

3. Clusters of θεός for יהוה in the LXX Pentateuch

The following texts are those in which θεός appears for יהוה three or more times in a single narrative or literary unit. I have cast a rather wide net in an attempt to include all relevant data, however it will become apparent that not all of these groups represent a pattern of intentional departure from the source text. The texts are arranged in canonical order.

3.1. Genesis 4:1-16: Cain and Abel

	LXX	MT	
4:1	καὶ εἶπεν Ἐκτεσάμην ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ	ותאמר קניתי איש את־יהוה	MT SP J LXX, Not extant in the Scrolls
4:3	ἤνεγκεν Κάιν ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν τῆς γῆς θυσίαν τῷ κυρίῳ,	ויבא קין מפרי האדמה מנחה ליהוה	MT SP 4Q2 J LXX
4:4	καὶ ἐπείδεν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ Ἄβελ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ	וישע יהוה אל־הבל ואל־מנחתו	MT SP 4Q2 J LXX
4:6	καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῷ Κάιν	ויאמר יהוה אל־קין	MT SP J LXX, not extant in the Scrolls
4:9	καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Κάιν	ויאמר יהוה אל־קין	MT SP 4Q2 J LXX
4:13	καὶ εἶπεν Κάιν πρὸς τὸν κύριον	ויאמר קין אל־יהוה	MT SP 4Q2 LXX
4:15	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ κύριος ὁ θεός Οὐχ οὕτως· πᾶς ὁ ἀποκτείνας Κάιν ἐπτά ἐκδικούμενα παραλύσει. καὶ ἔθετο κύριος ὁ θεὸς σημεῖον τῷ Κάιν τοῦ μὴ ἀνελεῖν αὐτὸν πάντα τὸν εὐρίσκοντα αὐτόν.	ויאמר לו יהוה לכן כל־הרג קין שבעתים יקם וישם יהוה לקין אות לבלתי הכות־אתו כל־מצאו	MT SP J LXX, not extant in the Scrolls
4:16	ἐξῆλθεν δὲ Κάιν ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ θεοῦ	יצא קין מלפני יהוה	MT SP J LXX, not extant in the Scrolls

The first cluster of θεός for יהוה appears in Genesis 4:1-16, the story of Cain and Abel. In the Hebrew version of this narrative, the tetragrammaton is used exclusively. The LXX, however, shows variation in its choice of equivalents for the divine name.

In MT 4:1, Eve gives birth to Cain “with the help of יהוה,” but the LXX has ὁ θεός. In 3-4a, Cain

and Abel bring their offerings to יהוה/κύριος . However, in 4b-5, it is ὁ θεός (for יהוה) who regards Abel's offering but not Cain's. When Cain becomes angry, κύριος ὁ θεός (יהוה) speaks to Cain (v. 6). After Cain kills Abel, ὁ θεός (יהוה) confronts Cain and pronounces the curse him (v. 9, cf. v. 10).¹⁰⁶ Cain appeals his punishment before κύριος (יהוה). κύριος ὁ θεός (for יהוה) qualifies the judgment, placing a mark on Cain so that no one will kill him. We are then told that Cain leaves the presence of ὁ θεός (יהוה).

In this account we see that the κύριος for יהוה equivalence is avoided in most instances. The two exceptions in vv. 3, 13 appear in the narration and have to do with making offerings and appeals to κύριος. In vv. 6, 15(2x) the translator gives κύριος ὁ θεός for יהוה, twice when God speaks to Cain, and once when God places the mark on Cain. The reason for this use of the double name is not immediately clear, however one might posit that the translator wished to include the term θεός, as he prefers ὁ θεός elsewhere in the passage.¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere the translator gives ὁ θεός for יהוה every time God and Cain are brought into direct contact (4:1, 9, 10, 16). In addition, at 4:4-5 it is ὁ θεός, rather than יהוה, who favors Abel's offering over Cain's.

Can this aspect of the translation be linked to any other tendency present in the LXX here? Joel Lohr has observed that the translator attempts to provide a theological explanation for God's preference of Abel over Cain.¹⁰⁸ He finds this primarily in the vocabulary of the LXX, which heightens the contrast between the two and casts a negative light on Cain. In 4:2 the vocations of the brothers are contrasted with δέ (MT has ו). Although the Hebrew uses the same term for both Cain's and Abel's

¹⁰⁶In verse 10 the LXX supplies ὁ θεός, in the Hebrew the speaker is implied.

¹⁰⁷Wevers notes the translator's preference for the double name, but finds no apparent exegetical reason for it (*NGTG*, 60). Outside of this passage and Gen 6-8 (discussed below), the translator adds θεός to form κύριος ὁ θεός at Gen 5:29 (καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἦν κατηράσατο κύριος ὁ θεός); 10:9 (οὗτος ἦν γίγας κυνηγὸς ἐναντίον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ); 11:9 (καὶ ἐκεῖθεν διέσπειρεν αὐτοὺς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ πρόσωπον πάσης τῆς γῆς); 16:7 (εὗρεν δὲ αὐτὴν ἄγγελος κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ). The translator adds κύριος to form κύριος ὁ θεός at 9:12 (καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Νωε). In all of these instances SP = MT, not extant in the scrolls.

¹⁰⁸Joel N. Lohr, "Righteous Abel, wicked Cain: Genesis 4:1-16 in the Masoretic text, the Septuagint, and the New Testament," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71 (2009): 485-96.

offerings, מנחה, the LXX distinguishes between the two, using θυσία for Cain's and δῶρον for Abel's.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, the MT uses נָשָׂא to indicate Yahweh's disposition toward both offerings, but the LXX uses two different terms. θεός has regard for (ἐπεῖδον) Abel's offering, a term that implies favor.¹¹⁰ In contrast, θεός “did not pay attention to” (οὐ προσέσχεν) Cain's offering. After Cain reacts to God's rejection of his offering, God tells him somewhat cryptically,

LXX	MT
4:7 οὐκ, ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκης, ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλης, ἥμαρτες; ἡσύχασον· πρὸς σὲ ἡ ἀποστροφή αὐτοῦ, καὶ σὺ ἄρξεις αὐτοῦ	הלא אס־תיטיב שאת ואם לא תיטיב לפתח חטאת רבין ואליך תשוקתו ואתה תמשל־בו

The translator, faced with both the difficult Hebrew and the apparent arbitrariness of God, interprets the statement as a reference to correct cultic observance.

The final element Lohr finds in this LXX text is supported by the SP, Peshitta, and Vulgate.

Whereas the MT tells us that “Cain spoke to his brother Abel,” the LXX relates what he spoke:

Διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πεδῖον. This phrase suggests that Cain's murder of Abel was premeditated, and thereby casts Cain in a much more negative light. Interestingly, although Lohr notices the discrepancies in the LXX's use of divine names, he fails to address them specifically. The presence of both a clear bias against Cain and an unusual treatment of the divine names may be significant.

If we compare this pericope to the Balaam narrative, we find several similarities. Both Cain and Balaam are seen as negative characters, especially in later traditions. Furthermore, in both cases God's relationship to the characters seems somewhat ambivalent. God rejects Cain's offering and condemns him for the murder of Abel, but also warns Cain and shows him a degree of leniency. In the case of Balaam, Balaam is identified as one who hears from and is obedient to God, yet God becomes angry with Balaam and nearly kills him. In Gen 4:1-16 and Num 22-24 we see an unusual pattern of

¹⁰⁹Lohr cites Philo (*QG* 1.62) to discuss the difference between the two. For the purposes of this study, it is sufficient to note that the translator apparently wanted to distinguish the two offerings (“Righteous Abel, Wicked Cain,” 487).

¹¹⁰Cf. Gen 16:13; Exod 2:25.

rendering the divine name, which includes ὁ θεός in multiple instances where אלהים is not present.

Both of these patterns have exceptions. When Cain makes his offering and appeals the harshness of God's verdict, the LXX gives κύριος. In Balaam's case, κύριος appears only when Balaam declares his sin before the angel of κύριος.¹¹¹

3.2. Genesis 6-8: The Flood Narrative

	LXX	MT ¹¹²		LXX	MT
6:2	θεός	אלהים	7:1 ¹¹³	κύριος ὁ θεός	יהוה
6:3	κύριος ὁ θεός	יהוה	7:5	κύριος ὁ θεός	יהוה
6:4	θεός	אלהים	7:9 ¹¹⁴	θεός	אלהים
6:5	κύριος ὁ θεός	יהוה	7:16 (1°)	ὁ θεός	אלהים
6:6	θεός	יהוה	7:16 (2°)	κύριος ὁ θεός	יהוה
6:7	θεός	יהוה	8:1 (1°)	θεός	אלהים
6:8	κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ	יהוה	8:1 (2°)	θεός	אלהים
6:9	θεός	אלהים	8:15	κύριος ὁ θεός	אלהים
6:11	θεός	אלהים	8:20	θεός	יהוה
6:12	κύριος ὁ θεός	אלהים	8:21 (1°)	κύριος ὁ θεός	יהוה
6:13	θεός	אלהים	8:21 (2°)	κύριος ὁ θεός	יהוה
6:22	κύριος ὁ θεός	אלהים			

In the MT version of the flood narrative (Gen 6-8) יהוה occurs 11 times, and אלהים occurs 12 times. In comparison, the LXX version has κύριος 11 times and θεός 23 times. The LXX translates the divine names as usual (κύριος for יהוה, θεός for אלהים, κύριος ὁ θεός for יהוה אלהים) seven times.¹¹⁵ The

¹¹¹Wevers notes that this is appropriate, as repentant prayer is only appropriately addressed to Yahweh, Israel's God. (*NGTN*, 379).

¹¹²The Qumran evidence in Gen 6-8 is very fragmentary and does not contain any instances of κύριος or θεός. Unless otherwise noted, SP = MT with respect to the divine name used.

¹¹³Here the SP has אלהים.

¹¹⁴Against both the MT and LXX, the SP has יהוה here.

¹¹⁵At 6:2, 4, 9, 11, 13; 7:9(vs. SP); and 8:1(2x).

translator gives θεός for יהוה three times,¹¹⁶ and supplies κύριος three times¹¹⁷ and θεός eight times¹¹⁸ with no extant Hebrew equivalent. The translator's unsystematic approach in chs. 6-8 results in a text in which κύριος never appears alone, although there are 8 occurrences of יהוה occurring alone. We cannot conclude that the translator simply avoids κύριος, since he does supply κύριος without an extant Hebrew counterpart. Neither does this reflect a preference for the combined designation κύριος ὁ θεός, since θεός occurs alone 10 times in the narrative (for either יהוה or אלהים).¹¹⁹

Wevers suggests that the use of “Lord God” recalls the Eden narrative and its subsequent events, and that it is appropriate in reference to God's favor for Noah.¹²⁰ However, he ultimately concludes that the translator of Genesis uses the double name arbitrarily.¹²¹ In spite of this Wevers does suggest that the inclusion of ὁ θεός throughout the flood narrative portrays God as creator, rather than as covenantal Lord.¹²²

There is some similarity here to the Genesis 4 account, where the translator both substitutes the Greek generic term for deity for the tetragrammaton and adds it to κύριος despite the absence of that usual Hebrew counterpart. Although the translator's interpretation of the text is not as apparent as it was in Genesis 4, the texts do share some similarities. The element of divine judgment is present in both accounts, and it is possible that the translator was uncomfortable with the actions of God. Here, in the context of catastrophic judgment, ὁ θεός becomes the dominant term in this theologically unsettling account of a God who judges and destroys human civilization.

¹¹⁶At 6:6, 7; 8:20.

¹¹⁷At 6:12, 22; 8:15.

¹¹⁸At 6:3, 5, 8, 7:1(SP = G), 5, 16b; 8:21(2x).

¹¹⁹Excluding the phrase “sons of God.”

¹²⁰Wevers, *NGTG*, 78.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 82.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 79.

3.3. Genesis 13: Abram and Lot Divide the Land

	LXX	MT ¹²³
13:4	καὶ ἐπεκαλέσατο ἐκεῖ Ἀβράμ <u>τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου</u> .	וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם אַבְרָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:
13:10 (1 ^o)	πρὸ τοῦ καταστρέψαι <u>τὸν θεὸν</u> Σόδομα καὶ Γόμορρα.	לִפְנֵי שַׁחַת יְהוָה אֶת־סְדֹם וְאֶת־עִמּוֹרָה
13:10 (2 ^o)	ὥς ὁ παράδεισος <u>τοῦ θεοῦ</u> καὶ ὥς ἡ γῆ Αἰγύπτου ἕως ἐλθεῖν εἰς Ζόγορα.	כִּנְי־יְהוָה כְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶכָּה צֶעֶר:
13:13	οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ἐν Σοδόμοις πονηροὶ καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐναντίον <u>τοῦ θεοῦ</u> σφόδρα.	וְאִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם רָעִים וְחַמְטִים לִיְהוָה מְאֹד:
13:14	Ὁ δὲ <u>θεὸς</u> εἶπεν τῷ Ἀβράμ	וַיְהוָה אָמַר אֶל־אַבְרָם
13:18	καὶ ὑποκόδομησεν ἐκεῖ θυσιαστήριον <u>κυρίῳ</u> .	וַיִּבְנֶה־שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לִיְהוָה: פ

Genesis 13 describes Abram and Lot dividing and settling the land. The expected translation κύριος for יְהוָה is used twice (13:4, 18), where Abram is depicted building altars to Yahweh. The four other occurrences of יְהוָה in chapter 13 are translated by ὁ θεός. In v. 10, Lot surveys the land (the narrator states that this is before ὁ θεός (יְהוָה) destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) and sees that it is like ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ (יְהוָה). In verse 13, after Abram and Lot settle in their respective places, the narrator states that the people of Sodom were πονηροὶ καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ (יְהוָה) σφόδρα. In the following verse 14, ὁ θεός (יְהוָה) speaks to Abram, telling him that he will give Abram all the land.

In this chapter κύριος for יְהוָה appears only in the context of worship—when Abram invokes and builds an altar to Yahweh.¹²⁴ ὁ θεός appears in connection with Sodom, and Sodom's negative associations may have influenced the translator's use of that designation. The occurrence of ὁ θεός for יְהוָה in v. 14 seems to break this pattern, but may have been used out of attraction to ὁ θεός in v. 13.¹²⁵

¹²³In all these instances the SP support the MT against the LXX. The Scrolls are not extant after v. 3.

¹²⁴Similarly, in Gen 4:3 Cain brings an offering to κύριος. However, compare Gen 8:20, where Noah builds an altar to θεός.

¹²⁵Wevers suggests that the use of θεός throughout the rest of the chapter may be intentional, although he does not comment on what the translator's intention may have been. (*NGTN*, 176-7).

3.4. Exodus 3-6: Moses and the People

LXX	MT ¹²⁶
3:18 ...καὶ ἐρεῖς πρὸς αὐτόν <u>Ὁ θεὸς</u> τῶν Ἑβραίων προσκέκληται ἡμᾶς ... ἵνα θύσωμεν <u>τῷ θεῷ</u> ἡμῶν.	ואמרתם אליו <u>יהוה אלהי העבריים</u> נקרה עלינו ... ונזבח <u>ליהוה אלהינו</u> :
4:1 ...ἐροῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι Οὐκ ὥπται σοι <u>ὁ θεός</u> , τί ἐρῶ πρὸς αὐτούς;	... יאמרו לא־נראה אליך <u>יהוה</u> :
4:11 εἶπεν δὲ <u>κύριος</u> πρὸς Μωυσῆν ... οὐκ ἐγὼ <u>κύριος ὁ θεός</u> ;	ויאמר <u>יהוה</u> אליו ... הלא אנכי <u>יהוה</u> :
4:30 καὶ ἐλάλησεν Ἀαρὼν πάντα τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα, ἃ ἐλάλησεν <u>ὁ θεός</u> πρὸς Μωυσῆν...	וידבר אהרן את כל־הדברים אשר־דבר <u>יהוה</u> אל־משה ...
4:31 ... ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο <u>ὁ θεός</u> τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραήλ...	... כִּי־פקד <u>יהוה</u> את־בני ישראל...
5:3 καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ <u>Ὁ θεός</u> τῶν Ἑβραίων προσκέκληται ἡμᾶς ... ὅπως θύσωμεν <u>τῷ θεῷ</u> ἡμῶν...	ויאמרו <u>אלהי</u> העברים נקרא עלינו ... ונזבח <u>ליהוה</u> אלהינו ...
5:17 ... Πορευθῶμεν θύσωμεν <u>τῷ θεῷ</u> ἡμῶν.	... נלכה נזבח <u>ליהוה</u> :
5:21 καὶ εἶπαν αὐτοῖς Ἴδοι <u>ὁ θεός</u> ὑμᾶς...	ויאמרו אלהם ירא <u>יהוה</u> עליכם ...
6:26 ... οἷς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς <u>ὁ θεός</u> ἐξαγαγεῖν τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου σὺν δυνάμει αὐτῶν.	... אשר אמר <u>יהוה</u> להם הוציאו את־בני ישראל מארץ מצרים על־צבאתם:

The early chapters of Exodus tell of the initial self-revelation of Yahweh to the people of Israel, and their deliverance from captivity in Egypt. ὁ θεός occurs for יהוה more frequently in these early chapters than throughout LXX Exodus as a whole, but these occurrences are scattered more widely than the groups discussed above.

In chapters 3-6 ὁ θεός appears for יהוה eight times.¹²⁷ In 3:18, God instructs Moses to tell Pharaoh to release the Israelites. The translator renders יהוה אלהים with ὁ θεός twice. In 4:1 Moses voices his fear that the Israelites will reject his message and claim that ὁ θεός (יהוה) did not actually appear to him.¹²⁸ In 4:30-31 Aaron tells the Israelites everything that ὁ θεός (יהוה) has spoken to Moses, and the

¹²⁶In all these instances the SP and Scrolls (where extant) support the MT against the LXX.

¹²⁷The translator also provides a θεός as a subject where it is implied in the Hebrew, in 3:12, 16(2x). The translator adds θεός once, at 4:11. Once in this section (3:4) the translator gives κύριος where the MT (=SP) has אלהים, but this is probably a result of assimilation to the κύριος/יהוה earlier in the same verse.

¹²⁸Wevers suggests that θεός is used to indicate that the people did not accept the revelation of God's name (*NGTE*, 40, 70).

people believe that ὁ θεός (יהוה) has taken note of their trouble.¹²⁹ In 5:21 after Pharaoh has increased the workload of the Israelites, the people confront Moses and Aaron and provoke the judgment of ὁ θεός (יהוה) upon them for inciting Pharaoh's wrath. κύριος appears relatively frequently in these chapters, in God's interaction with Moses and Moses' exchanges with Pharaoh. Wevers suggests that the LXX intentionally delays the revelation of the name κύριος to the Israelites until after the Lord has revealed his name to Moses in 6:2-3, and to the Israelites in vv. 6-8.¹³⁰ If Wevers is correct, these chapters show an approach to the translation of the divine name that is primarily motivated by a sensitivity to the narrative and its logic over, but not necessarily excluding, theological considerations.

However, it should be noted that אלהים is frequently used by the MT in these chapters. Also, it seems somewhat odd that the translator would allow Moses and Aaron to speak of κύριος to Pharaoh (5:1-2), but delay speaking it to the Israelites.

3.5. Exodus 16: Israel Complains

LXX	MT ¹³¹
16:7 καὶ πρῶτὶ ὄψεσθε τὴν δόξαν κυρίου ἐν τῷ εἰσακοῦσαι τὸν γογγυσμὸν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ· ἡμεῖς δὲ τί ἐσμὲν ὅτι διαγογγύζετε καθ' ἡμῶν;	ובקר וראיתם את־כבוד יהוה בשמעו את־תלנתיכם על־יהוה ונחנו מה כי תלנו עלינו:
16:8 καὶ εἶπεν Μωσῆς Ἐν τῷ διδόναι κύριον ὑμῖν ἐσπέρας κρέα φαγεῖν καὶ ἄρτους τὸ πρῶτὶ εἰς πλησμονήν, διὰ τὸ εἰσακοῦσαι κύριον τὸν γογγυσμὸν ὑμῶν, ὃν ὑμεῖς διαγογγύζετε καθ' ἡμῶν· ἡμεῖς δὲ τί ἐσμὲν; οὐ γὰρ καθ' ἡμῶν ὁ γογγυσμὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.	ויאמר משה באת יהוה לכם בערב בשר לאכל ולחם בבקר לשבע בשמע יהוה את־תלנתיכם אשר־אתם מלינים עליו ונחנו מה לא־עלינו תלנתיכם כי על־יהוה:
16:9 εἶπεν δὲ Μωσῆς πρὸς Ἀαρὼν Εἶπον πάση συναγωγῇ υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ Προσέλθετε ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰσακήκοεν γὰρ ὑμῶν τὸν γογγυσμόν.	ויאמר משה אל־אהרן אמר אל־כל־עדת בני ישראל קרבו לפני יהוה כי שמע את תלנתיכם:

¹²⁹Compare 4:28 where Moses tells Aaron all that κύριος (יהוה) has told him.

¹³⁰NGTE, 57. Compare 5:17, 21 where θεός is used for יהוה in contexts involving the Israelites. Larry J. Perkins, in his introduction to the NETS translation of Exodus, acknowledges this possibility, and suggests that the translator may have felt it more appropriate to use a generic term in Moses' first appeal to Pharaoh. ("To the Reader of Exodus," NETS, 46).

¹³¹In all these instances, SP = MT with respect to the divine names used. Unfortunately, the Qumran evidence is too fragmentary to provide any textual insights.

In Exodus 16, the Israelites complain to Moses about their lack of food. God hears their protests, and responds by sending quail and manna. Verses 1-12 describe the complaint of the people, and the exchange between the people, Moses, and God. Most of the translations of the divine name are what we would expect: κύριος represents יהוה seven times, and κύριος ὁ θεός represents יהוה אלהים once. In three instances, however, θεός replaces יהוה.

In 16:7, Moses tells the Israelites that in the morning they will see the glory of κύριος (יהוה), because “he has heard your complaining against ὁ θεός (יהוה).” In the following verse (16:8), Moses tells the people that they are not complaining against Moses and Aaron, but against ὁ θεός (for יהוה). In 16:9 Moses and Aaron tell the people to come before ὁ θεός (יהוה), because he has heard their complaining. In vv 10-12, κύριος (יהוה) appears and promises to provide the people food, telling them that then γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν (יהוה אלהיכם).

In this section the translator follows the standard translation for יהוה in most instances, but departs from this three times. Wevers suggests that by using θεός in these three instances the translator emphasizes the distinction between God and the people.¹³² On the other hand, Martin Rösel suggests this exemplifies a tendency he sees in the LXX to avoid κύριος in contexts of judgment or punishment.¹³³

Although any of these explanations are plausible, it must be acknowledged that only three occurrences of ὁ θεός for the tetragrammaton stretches the definition of a pattern. If the translator employs ὁ θεός intending to emphasize the distinction between the divine and human, why does he not do this elsewhere? Furthermore, similar events are described in the surrounding chapters where the translator is content to represent the tetragrammaton with κύριος. In chapter 17, the Israelites complain

¹³²NGTE, 246.

¹³³Rösel, “Reading and Translation,” 420-1. Cf also Deut. 2.14; Num 16:5, 11.

and Moses responds, saying τί λοιδορεῖσθέ μοι καὶ τί πειράζετε κύριον.

3.6. Exodus 19: Israel at Sinai

	LXX	MT ¹³⁴
19:3	καὶ Μωσῆς ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους λέγων Τάδε ἐρεῖς τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰακώβ καὶ ἀναγγελεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ	ומשה עלה אל־האלהים ויקרא אליו יהוה מן־ההר לאמר כה תאמר לבית יעקב ותניד לבני ישראל:
19:7	ἦλθεν δὲ Μωσῆς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τοῦ λαοῦ, καὶ παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους, οὓς συνέταξεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός.	ויבא משה ויקרא לזקני העם וישם לפניהם את כל־הדברים האלה אשר צוהו יהוה:
19:8	ἀπεκρίθη δὲ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ὁμοθυμαδὸν καὶ εἶπαν Πάντα, ὅσα εἶπεν ὁ θεός, ποιήσομεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα. ἀνήνεγκεν δὲ Μωσῆς τοὺς λόγους τοῦ λαοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.	ויענו כל־העם יחדו ויאמרו כל אשר־דבר יהוה נעשה וישב משה את־דברי העם אל־יהוה:
19:18	τὸ δὲ ὄρος τὸ Σινὰ ἐκαπνίζετο ὅλον διὰ τὸ καταβεβηκέναι τὸν θεὸν ἐπ' αὐτὸ ἐν πυρί, καὶ ἀνέβαιναν ὁ καπνὸς ὡς καπνὸς καμίνου· καὶ ἐξέστη πᾶς ὁ λαὸς σφόδρα.	והר סיני עשן כלו מפני אשר ירד עליו יהוה באש ויעל עשנו כעשן הכבשן ויחרד כל־ההר מאד:
19:21	καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός πρὸς Μωσῆν λέγων Καταβάς διαμάρτυραι τῷ λαῷ, μήποτε ἐγγίσωσιν πρὸς τὸν θεόν κατανοήσαι, καὶ πέσωσιν ἐξ αὐτῶν πλῆθος·	ויאמר יהוה אל־משה רד הער בעם פן־יהרסו אל־יהוה לראות ונפל ממנו רב:
19:22	καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς οἱ ἐγγίζοντες κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ἁγιασθήτωσαν, μήποτε ἀπαλλάξῃ ἀπ' αὐτῶν κύριος.	וגם הכהנים הנגשים אל־יהוה יתקדשו פן־יפרץ בהם יהוה:
19:23	καὶ εἶπεν Μωσῆς πρὸς τὸν θεόν Οὐ δυνήσεται ὁ λαὸς προσαναβῆναι πρὸς τὸ ὄρος τὸ Σινά· σὺ γάρ διαμεμαρτύρησαι ἡμῖν λέγων Ἀφόρισαι τὸ ὄρος καὶ ἁγιάσαι αὐτό.	ויאמר משה אל־יהוה לא־יוכל העם לעלות אל־הר סיני כי־אתה העדתה בנו לאמר הגבל את־ההר וקדשתו:

Exodus 19 describes the events that took place directly before the giving of the Ten

Commandments (ch. 20). Although ὁ θεός appears for יהוה nine times in this chapter, κύριος also

appears for יהוה nine times. In verse 3, Moses goes up to τὸ ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ (= SP). The Greek, however, has

Moses going up εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ. This is apparently a move by the translator to preserve the

transcendence of God by putting a little more distance between Moses and God. This is followed by a

series of ὁ θεός – יהוה equivalences. In the text, after Moses goes up to the mountain of ὁ θεός (אלהים),

¹³⁴In all these instances, SP and the Qumran material (where extant) = MT with respect to the divine names used.

ὁ θεός (יהוה) speaks to Moses from the mountain.¹³⁵ Moses tells the elders of the people what ὁ θεός (יהוה) had commanded him (v.7). In verse 8 the people respond that they will do whatever ὁ θεός (יהוה) says, and Moses relates these words to ὁ θεός (יהוה).

In the following verses (9-17), Moses receives instructions about setting limits around the mountain. The translator gives the standard translations κύριος for יהוה four times and ὁ θεός for אלהים once. κύριος speaks to Moses twice (εἶπεν δὲ κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν); Moses relates the words of κύριος to the people (ἀνήγγειλεν δὲ Μωυσῆς τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ λαοῦ πρὸς κύριον), and the Lord tells Moses that on the third day καταβήσεται κύριος ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τὸ Σιναι ἐναντίον παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ. On the third day Moses takes the Israelites εἰς συνάντησιν τοῦ θεοῦ.

Verses 18-25 contain several more instances of ὁ θεός for יהוה. In v. 18 ὁ θεός (יהוה) descends to Sinai with fire. Verse 19 has ὁ θεός (אלהים) answering Moses. In v. 20, it is κύριος (יהוה) who descends on the mountain and calls Moses. However, in v. 21 it is ὁ θεός (יהוה) who tells Moses to warn the people to not approach ὁ θεός (יהוה). In v. 22, the priests who approach κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ (אל-יהוה) must be sanctified. In v. 23, Moses tells ὁ θεός (יהוה) that the people will not be able to approach the mountain. In v. 24, κύριος (יהוה) tells Moses to go down the mountain, and to bring Aaron up. He warns Moses to not let the people come up to ὁ θεός (יהוה).¹³⁶

It is difficult to discern a pattern in the translator's treatment of the divine name here. In v. 18, ὁ θεός (for יהוה) descends to Mt. Sinai, in v. 20 it is κύριος. In v. 10 ὁ θεός speaks to Moses, but in v. 21 it is κύριος. Wevers comments that vv. 7-8 show a pattern in which covenant-making is expressed in terms of God and people, although he acknowledges that this is not the case in parallel passages, e.g.

¹³⁵This second instance of θεός is probably a result of assimilation to the first instance.

¹³⁶At the end of v. 24 κύριος appears with no Hebrew equivalent. The translator was probably influenced by the similar construction in v. 22.

24:3, 7.¹³⁷ Although the frequent use of ὁ θεός for יהוה was a deliberate choice on the part of the translator, his lack of consistency or any apparent pattern in this substitution obscures his intent.

3.7. Exodus 24: Theophany

	LXX	MT ¹³⁸
24:2	καὶ ἐγγιεῖ Μωσῆς μόνος πρὸς τὸν θεόν, αὐτοὶ δὲ οὐκ ἐγγιούσιν· ὁ δὲ λαὸς οὐ συναναβήσεται μετ' αὐτῶν.	ונגש משה לבדו אל־יהוה והם לא יגשו והעם לא יעלו עמו:
24:3	εἰσῆλθεν δὲ Μωυσῆς καὶ διηγήσατο τῷ λαῷ πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ δικαιώματα· ἀπεκρίθη δὲ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς φωνῇ μιᾷ λέγοντες Πάντας τοὺς λόγους, οὓς ἐλάλησεν κύριος, ποιήσομεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα.	ויבא משה ויספר לעם את כל־דברי יהוה ואת כל־המשפטים ויען כל־העם קול אחד ויאמרו כל־הדברים אשר־דבר יהוה נעשה:
24:5	καὶ ἐξαπέστειλεν τοὺς νεανίσκους τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ, καὶ ἀνήνεγκαν ὀλοκαυτώματα, καὶ ἔθυσαν θυσίαν σωτηρίου τῷ θεῷ μοςχάρια.	וישלח את־נערי בני ישראל ויעלו עלת ויזבחו זבחים שלמים ליהוה פרים:
24:16	καὶ κατέβη ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τὸ Σινά, καὶ ἐκάλυψεν αὐτὸ ἡ νεφέλη ἕξ ἡμέρας· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν κύριος τὸν Μωυσῆν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἐκ μέσου τῆς νεφέλης.	וישכן כבוד־יהוה על־הר סיני ויכסהו הענן ששת ימים ויקרא אל־משה ביום השביעי מתוך הענן:

There are four occurrences of ὁ θεός as an equivalent for יהוה in Exodus 24. The chapter begins with ὁ θεός (אלהים) commanding that Moses, Aaron and the seventy elders of Israel come up to to worship at a distance, but that only Moses could come near to ὁ θεός (יהוה) (v. 2). In the following verse (3), Moses reports what ὁ θεός (יהוה) commanded, and the people respond that they will do what κύριος (יהוה) commands. In v. 5, Moses sends young men to offer peace offerings to ὁ θεός. 24:16 says that the glory of ὁ θεός (יהוה) came down on Mt Sinai.

Wevers observes, “Throughout the entire account of ch. 24 all the references to יהוה have been changed in Exod to “God” except where he is presented as speaking in vv. 3, 4, 7, 12, 16 or as making the covenant with Israel (v.8), and the reference to the glory of the Lord in v.17.” He concludes that

¹³⁷NGTE, 296.

¹³⁸In all these instances SP = MT with respect to the divine names used. The Qumran evidence (in this case 4Q22) is too fragmentary to shed light on these verses.

whenever human action is described, the LXX avoids a reference to “the Lord.”¹³⁹ If this is indeed a distinction the translator makes, it is a subtle one. Verse 3 is illustrative, where the translator gives different renderings for the divine name in the two similar phrases: πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ (יהוה) and λόγους οὓς ἐλάλησεν κύριος (יהוה).

The context of covenant-making is similar to that in Exodus 16. However, κύριος also appears for יהוה multiple times in chapter 24. In verse 1, Moses is instructed to come up πρὸς κύριον, along with other leaders of the people. In 24:3, 7 the people respond that they will do and heed all that κύριος has spoken. At 24:8 Moses sprinkles blood on the people and declares the covenant that κύριος made with them. In verse 12 κύριος tells Moses to come up to him on the mountain, and in verses 16 and 17 κύριος speaks and appears to Moses.¹⁴⁰

3.8. Summary

These groups of passages discussed above in which ὁ θεός is the counterpart to יהוה are characterized more by their diversity than their unity. No single context, theme, or issue unifies all of these texts. None give ὁ θεός for יהוה exclusively, but they instead contain a mixture of standard and non-standard translation equivalents. Often, κύριος appears for יהוה in the majority of instances. Furthermore, the use of the combined designation κύριος ὁ θεός complicates the question of the significance of the divine names, and suggests that perhaps the question of the LXX's use of the divine names should not be reduced to a binary simply between ὁ θεός and κύριος.

In Genesis 4, the LXX translator wrestles with the apparent arbitrariness of God's preference for Abel over Cain. In the Greek text, Cain and Abel are further differentiated, and Cain is cast in a negative light. We find a consistent inclusion of ὁ θεός when God interacts with Cain, with the

¹³⁹NGTE, 379-80.

¹⁴⁰Exodus 24:3 also has an instance of θεός for יהוה, followed by κύριος for יהוה in the same verse in a similar context.

exception of the offering to κύριος and Cain's appeal to God that his punishment is too great.

In the flood narrative (Genesis 6-8), the translator shows a considerable inconsistency in his translation of the divine names. κύριος never appears alone, and we see a marked preference for the combined designation κύριος ὁ θεός. This preference for including ὁ θεός, though not always to the exclusion of κύριος, suggests the translator was not simply avoiding κύριος, but perhaps found a special significance in ὁ θεός that he wished to highlight.

In Genesis 13 ὁ θεός appears for יהוה in contexts involving Sodom. This may be due to the negative associations with Sodom, and God's imminent destruction of the city. There is, however, no such tendency to avoid κύριος when the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is actually described.¹⁴¹

Exodus 3-6 shows a frequent avoidance of κύριος, possibly to reflect the Israelites' ignorance of the tetragrammaton until its revelation to them in chapter six. If this is correct, it suggests that the translator understood κύριος and the tetragrammaton to be closely linked, and that the translator took the narrative into account in his choice between using κύριος or ὁ θεός. The translator of Numbers may be revealing a similar sensitivity to the logic of the narrative in his treatment of the divine name.

Exodus 16 employs ὁ θεός as the counterpart to יהוה twice when a complaint has been expressed, and once when the Israelites are told to assemble before God, also in the context of complaint. The translator may have adopted ὁ θεός to emphasize the distinction between the people and God, or to avoid κύριος in association with punishment or judgment. ὁ θεός appears instead of κύριος only three times, making it difficult to ascertain a pattern or intent here.

Exodus 19 uses ὁ θεός for יהוה nine times. Wevers suggests that the translator wanted to put covenant-making in terms of ὁ θεός and the people. However, covenantal language is featured prominently in the following chapters, with no similar preference for ὁ θεός.

¹⁴¹E.g. καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐκτρίψαι κύριον (אלהים) πάσας τὰς πόλεις τῆς περιοίκου ἐμνήσθη ὁ θεός (אלהים) τοῦ Αβρααμ καὶ ἐξαπέστειλεν τὸν Λωτ ἐκ μέσου τῆς καταστροφῆς ἐν τῷ καταστρέψαι κύριον τὰς πόλεις ἐν αἷς κατῴκει ἐν αὐταῖς Λωτ (Gen 19:29).

In the account of theophany in Exodus 24, in a context similar to that of Exod 19, there is a tendency to employ ὁ θεός except in instances of divine speech. However, there are exceptions here too, as in 24:3: πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ...Πάντας τοὺς λόγους, οὓς ἐλάλησεν κύριος.

We can arrive at the following conclusions based on the above survey of groups of appearances of ὁ θεός where κύριος would be expected: (1) Most of these instances do not correspond to any extant Hebrew text and are not the result of any particular linguistic constraint.¹⁴² (2) These groups of ὁ θεός for יהוה are therefore most likely theologically or contextually motivated. (3) There is no single theological issue or theme that is characteristic of all these texts, and it is therefore unlikely that all of these translations of ὁ θεός for יהוה share the same motivation. (4) Occurrences of ὁ θεός for יהוה, especially in Genesis 4 and 6-8, often appear in contexts in which θεός also occurs as a plus. This suggests that perhaps inclusion of ὁ θεός rather than avoidance of κύριος may be a better way to characterize what we find in the LXX.

4. Extra-biblical Evidence

Outside of the Old Testament there is some evidence that the terms θεός and κύριος could be associated with different attributes of God. Different sources, however, disagree on which particular attributes were assigned to which name.

Philo asserts that the terms θεός and κύριος refer to the two principle characteristics (or activities) of God, which he calls δυνάμεις.¹⁴³ According to Philo, θεός refers to the beneficent and creative aspect of the divine, and κύριος to the ruling and judging aspect. In one case, Philo explains the significance of the three figures visiting Abraham before the destruction of Sodom (Gen 19):

¹⁴²E.g. supplying an implied subject, etc. This is especially clear in Genesis 4 and 6-8, where the translator often gives κύριος ὁ θεός for יהוה.

¹⁴³Symbolized by, for example, the cherubim (*QE* 2.62). See also *Abr.* 24:121; *Plant.* 20:86; *Mos.* 2:99; *QG* 2:51; *Her.* 6:22-23 For a more detailed discussion of Philo's conception of God see Edwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969), 21ff.

[T]he one in the middle is the Father of the universe, who in the sacred scriptures is called by his proper name, I am that I am [ὁ ὢν]; and the beings on each side are those most ancient powers which are always close to the living God, one of which is called his creative power [ποιητική], and the other his royal power [βασιλική]. And the creative power is God [θεός], for it is by this that he made and arranged the universe; and the royal power is the Lord [κύριος], for it is fitting that the Creator should lord it over and govern the creature.¹⁴⁴

Philo generally employs an allegorical approach to scripture, in which literal elements also have symbolic significance. In this case, the three figures visiting Abraham represent different divine characteristics. Although the literal meaning does have significance, allegorical meaning is usually the more important for Philo.¹⁴⁵ In his exegesis he often employs etymological resemblances, and here he may have been influenced by the common use of κύριος to refer to figures in a position of authority and power: rulers, heads of households, and deities.

The rabbis also held that the divine names were associated with different aspects of God. They, however, drew the distinction differently. They taught that the tetragrammaton was to be associated to God's mercy, and אלהים with God's judgment. The Midrash on Psalm 56:3, for example, states:

In God—I will praise His word—in the Lord—I will praise His word (Ps. 56:11). What is the difference in meaning between *In God* and *in the Lord*? R. Nehorai explained that where *God* (אלהים) is used, Scripture is speaking of Him as meting out justice, as in the verse *Thou shalt not revile God* (Ex. 22:27), or, as in the verse *The master of the house shall come near unto God* (Ex. 22:8) [in both verses God is understood to mean “judge”]; but where *Lord* (יהוה) is used, Scripture is speaking of Him as meting out mercy, as in the verse *The Lord, the Lord...merciful and gracious* (*ibid.* 34:6). Accordingly, David said to the Holy One, blessed be He: “If Thou metest out judgment against me, I accept Thee by saying, *In God—I will praise His word*; and if Thou metest out mercy to me, I accept Thee by saying *In the Lord—I will praise His word*.”¹⁴⁶

Neither of these interpretations of the divine names entail hard and fast rules. Rather they were attempts to explain the lexical variation in the text. For the rabbis both aspects of God were not mutually exclusive, but the use of different divine names could reflect the character of God and the

¹⁴⁴ *Abr.* 24:121; English translation from *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus, Translated from the Greek* (trans. C. D. Yonge; London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854-5).

¹⁴⁵ Peder Borgen, “Philo of Alexandria,” 333-342.

¹⁴⁶ *The Midrash on Psalms*, (trans. William G. Braude; New Haven: Yale UP, 1959). For a more detailed discussion of the rabbinic perspective on the names of God see Ephraim E. Urbach., *The Sages*. (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 1:448-61.

nature of his interactions with humans. Dahl and Segal state,

The contradiction between the Philonic and rabbinic “system” of relating God's attributes to his names is less important than it may seem to be. Both “systems” make it possible to see the mixture of mercy and justice as fundamental to the relationship between man and God.¹⁴⁷

Although Philo may be nearer chronologically and geographically to the translators of the LXX Pentateuch, the texts discussed above suggest a closer correlation of the LXX and rabbinic perspectives. Genesis 4, 6-8, 13, and Exodus 16 can plausibly be described as having to do with divine judgment. The other passages examined above do not fit into this schema, and judgment does not seem the appropriate category with which to associate the Balaam account. Both Philo and the rabbis were attempting to resolve the question they saw raised by the text's use of these two terms for God. For the LXX translators, this did not seem to be a major problem. The LXX readily interchanges ὁ θεός and κύριος, and we find no attempt in the LXX to use either ὁ θεός or κύριος exclusively

Instead, we find that these divine names could be used in ways to sharpen or subtly alter the overall sense of a text. Despite their differences, Philo and the rabbis both demonstrate that distinctions in significance could be associated with the different divine names. Although they lived after the time of the creation of the LXX, and were not translators themselves, they may represent a line of thinking that goes back to or even predates the LXX translators. The translators, then, may not have been doing something entirely new in their use of θεός and κύριος.

5. Conclusion: the Divine Name in the Balaam Account

I began by examining the use of κύριος and θεός in the LXX version of the Balaam account. The Septuagint version generally avoids the use of κύριος in contexts that involve Balaam, especially in contexts in which Balaam communicates with the divine. Although Balaam can speak of κύριος, the text never has κύριος speaking to or listening to Balaam. Instead, Balaam only interacts with θεός. The

¹⁴⁷ N.A. Dahl and Alan F. Segal, “Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God,” *JSJ* 9 (1978): 1-28.

single exception to this is in Numbers 22:34, where Balaam repents before the messenger of κύριος.

Outside of the narrative sections of the Balaam account, the translator normally maintains the standard translation equivalents. Throughout the rest of Numbers, and even within Balaam's oracles, the translator does not show a marked preference for ὁ θεός. This suggests that it is an aspect of the narrative involving Balaam that motivated the translator to use ὁ θεός instead of κύριος.

In order to contextualize the Septuagint's treatment of θεός and κύριος, I examined groups of passages in which the LXX uses ὁ θεός as the equivalent for יהוה. These passages are diverse, with no single unifying aspect or theme. Divine judgment is a theme present in many, but not all, of these texts. Foreigners appear in Genesis 13 and Numbers 22-24. Genesis 6-8 and Exodus 19, 24 contain displays of divine power. It is difficult to show that any of these themes are connected with the use of ὁ θεός as the equivalent for יהוה. One cannot, of course, expect to find a single characteristic that connects all these occurrences. The Septuagint is a collection of translations, and although one can make some generalizations about it, each translation of each book should be taken on its own terms. Furthermore, ὁ θεός / יהוה equivalences are rare in the LXX, and the contexts in which these equivalences occur are not entirely unique. Rösel overstates his case when he argues that nearly all substitutions of θεός for יהוה can convincingly be explained as theologically motivated translations.¹⁴⁸ However, he is correct in arguing for the possibility of a theological explanation for these renderings, and their likelihood in some cases.

In the case of the Balaam account, the translator was likely motivated by theological concerns. Substituting ὁ θεός for יהוה results in a slightly different picture of Balaam's relationship to God. Instead of speaking to and hearing from κύριος, the LXX's usual equivalent for יהוה, the Greek represents Balaam as communicating with ὁ θεός—perhaps a term less associated with relationship and

¹⁴⁸Rösel, "Reading and Translation," 422.

devotion.¹⁴⁹ Although we have no explicit evidence for the translator's bias against Balaam (compare the LXX's portrayal of Cain in Genesis 4), such a bias provides the best explanation of the translation, and accords with the overwhelmingly negative bias against Balaam in the theological interpretation of later writers.

In the LXX, the semantic distinction between ὁ θεός and κύριος (when used in reference to God) is subtle at best, and it is questionable whether the readers of the LXX and of the Hebrew texts would have walked away from the text with a significantly different sense of the relationship between Balaam and God. For the translator, however, his use of ὁ θεός was a way of preserving the correct sense of the text and maintained an appropriate distance between Balaam and the Lord God of Israel.

¹⁴⁹That is, in the narrative voice. Note that Balaam himself can speak about communication with κύριος. As well as the inarticulated πνεῦμα θεοῦ in 23:7 and 24:2.

CHAPTER THREE: MESSIANIC INTERPRETATION IN THE LXX BALAAM ORACLES

Chapter Synopsis: The Septuagint translation of Balaam's oracles has often been cited as evidence of a tendency toward messianic interpretation in the LXX Pentateuch. This chapter examines the elements of the LXX translation that diverge from its presumed Hebrew Vorlage with potential messianic significance: the translation of 23:21, the use of μονόκερως in 23:22 and 24:8, the translation of 24:17, and the term ἄνθρωπος.

1. Background

Balaam's oracles were vitally important texts in the Second Temple period and following.¹⁵⁰ Their predictions of the exaltation of Israel and a future conquering and ruling figure provided fodder for messianic speculation that could even fuel violent revolt. Although Balaam's oracles had little apparent impact on the New Testament, evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls and later Jewish and Christian writings indicate their widespread significance.¹⁵¹

Portions of the Balaam oracles appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls corpus. 4Q175 (4QTestimonia) contains an anthology of texts including Numbers 24:15-17.¹⁵² Although 4Q175 contains no commentary, many scholars conclude that these texts have eschatological significance and argue that these texts were understood to be messianic.¹⁵³ MS A of the *Damascus Document* (CD 7:19) also contains a reference to Numbers 24:17. The passage begins with quotation and exposition of Amos 5:26-27 and 9:11, but then gives a citation and interpretation of the star and the scepter of Numbers

¹⁵⁰This chapter will focus on the content of Balaam's oracles. For a more detailed discussion of the figure of Balaam see e.g. Charles H. Savelle, "Canonical and Extracanonial Portraits of Balaam," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (2009): 387-404; John T. Greene, "Balaam as a Figure and Type in Ancient Semitic Literature to the First Century B.C.E., with a Survey of Selected Post-Philo Applications of the Balaam Figure and Type," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1990): 82-147.

¹⁵¹There is no explicit citation of the Balaam oracles in the NT, although some have suggested that the Balaam narrative and oracles forms the background for the Matthean narrative of the Magi, e.g. Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 190-6. Balaam is used typologically in 2 Pet 2:15, Jude 11, and Rev 2:14 as a representative of people who love doing wrong and lead people astray.

¹⁵²Along with Exod 20.21b (SP = MT Deut 5:28-29 + 18:18-19), Deut 33:8-11, and probably a portion of 4Q379 (4QApocryphon of Joshua^b). See Jonathan G. Campbell, *The Exegetical Texts*, (Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 4; New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 88-99. Cf. also G.J. Brooke "Testimonia (4QTestim)," *ABD* 6:391-2.

¹⁵³Arguing for messianic significance see e.g. Jonathan G. Campbell, *The Exegetical Texts*. (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 88-99; G.J. Brooke "Testimonia (4QTestim)," *ABD* 6:391-2. But against see e.g. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, who agrees that these texts have eschatological significance, but argues that they are not explicitly messianic (*The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 98-100).

24:17. The writer interprets the verse as referring to two figures, the star representing the Interpreter of the Law, and the scepter representing the Prince of the Congregation.¹⁵⁴ Numbers 24:17-19 is cited in the War Scroll (1QM 11:5-7) as part of a prayer given by the high priest before battle. The War Scroll describes the future eschatological battle, but is not explicitly messianic. 1QSb 5:27-28 alludes to the scepter in Numbers 24:17 in a blessing on the “prince of the congregation” that contains allusions to Isaiah 11.¹⁵⁵ The frequency and context in which Numbers 24:17 appears in the Qumran literature leads most scholars to conclude that Numbers 24:17 played a significant role in the messianic speculations of the Qumran community, and perhaps the Jewish community as a whole.¹⁵⁶

Balaam's oracles remained important even after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. The last major Jewish revolt against Rome was led by Simon bar Kosiba in 132-135 CE. The rebellion was steeped in messianic concepts and ideals, and Rabbi Akiba is said to have explained “a star shall go forth from Jacob” (Numbers 24:17) as “Kosiba goes forth from Jacob” and to have called him “king” and “messiah.” During the rebellion, coins were minted bearing the name and title, “Simon, Prince of Israel.”¹⁵⁷

The Targumim generally show a messianic interpretation of Numbers 24:17. *Targum Onqelos* reads, “A king will arise from Jacob, and the anointed one [משיח] will be consecrated from Israel.”¹⁵⁸ *Targum Neofiti* states, “A king will arise from the house of Jacob and a redeemer and ruler from the

¹⁵⁴John Collins concludes from this citation that “Balaam's oracle was widely understood in a messianic sense and that the “Prince of the Congregation” was a messianic title” (*The Scepter and the Star*, (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 64). Dana M. Pike comments that the “Interpreter of the Law” is best understood as a future priestly figure, and is elsewhere called “messiah” and “chief priest” and the “prince of the congregation” as a messianic military leader (“The Book of Numbers at Qumran: Text and Context,” in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 166–93. 183.)

¹⁵⁵See Cathcart, “Numbers 24:17 in Ancient Translations and Interpretations,” in *The Interpretation of the Bible: the International Symposium in Slovenia* (ed. Jože Krašovec; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 511-20. Justin also conflates Num 24:17 with Isa 11 (*I Apol* 32.12-13), which suggests the presence of a tradition of messianic exegesis of these two texts.

¹⁵⁶See e.g. Jonathan G. Campbell, *The Exegetical Texts*, (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 93.

¹⁵⁷Joseph A Fitzmeyer, “The Bar Cochba Period” in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (ed. Joseph A Fitzmeyer), esp. 312-16.

¹⁵⁸Translation from Cathcart, “Numbers 24:17,” 512.

house of Israel.”¹⁵⁹ *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* reads, “When the mighty king from the house of Jacob will reign, and the Messiah, the mighty scepter from Israel will be anointed.”¹⁶⁰ The Targumim date from a much later period than the Scrolls and the Septuagint, and so witness to the significance of the Balaam oracles at a later period. However, they probably also preserve elements of older traditions of Jewish biblical interpretation.

Within the corpus known as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Numbers 24:17 is quoted in the *Testament of Judah* and the *Testament of Levi*. *T. Judah* (24:1-6) alludes to Numbers 24:17 using language of a “star of Jacob” and a “scepter” of God's kingdom.¹⁶¹ In *T. Levi*, the writer predicts a priestly figure whose “star will rise in heaven like a king” (18:3).¹⁶² Although the *Testaments* are textually problematic and contain both Jewish and Christian material, they bear witness to the application of Numbers 24:17 to a messianic figure in the early centuries CE.

The appeal of a Gentile prophet predicting the coming of a messiah was strong for the early Christian writers. Despite the challenge posed by the character of Balaam himself (who was universally condemned in the NT), they often appealed to Numbers 24:17 as a prediction of the coming of the Messiah.¹⁶³ For example, in his *First Apology*, Justin appealed to Balaam's prophecy as evidence that the Old Testament predicted Christ, blending language of Numbers 24:17 with a citation from Isaiah 11:

And Isaiah, another prophet, foretelling the same things in other words, spoke thus: “A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a flower shall spring from the root of Jesse; and His arm shall the nations trust.” And a star of light has arisen, and a flower has sprung from the root of Jesse—this

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 512-513.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 515-6; cf. Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 91.

¹⁶²Collins argues that both of these text have Jewish cores to them, but that the combination of an eschatological priest with royal messianic figure into one was the innovation of the Christian redactor (*Scepter and the Star*, 92).

¹⁶³Some writers attempted to disassociate Balaam from the content of his oracles, cf. Judith Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition* (Brown Judaic Studies 47; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1983), 102-3. However, Baskin may not have accounted for the possible use of florilegia, which may account for the conflation of Balaam's oracles with other texts that she cites.

Christ.”¹⁶⁴

As Judith Baskin suggests, the frequent Christian appeal to the Balaam oracles may have incited the nearly universal excoriation of Balaam in later Jewish interpretation.¹⁶⁵ In Rabbinic literature, Balaam is condemned for his attempts to curse Israel, and his involvement in leading the Israelites into apostasy.

Scholarly opinion is divided over whether the Hebrew version of the Balaam oracles is itself specifically “messianic.” However, it is evident that Balaam's oracles, especially Numbers 24:17, were often taken as messianic predictions during the Second Temple and early Christian periods. Because of this interpretive history, and on the basis of unique aspects of the LXX translation of the Balaam oracles, scholars have often cited the Septuagint version of parts of Balaam's oracles as evidence of messianic interpretation in the LXX Pentateuch.¹⁶⁶ The following study does not take a position on the nature of the Hebrew text, but instead examines elements unique to the Greek version and asks the question: Does the LXX reflect a messianic interpretation on the part of the translator, or do these elements make the text more likely to be interpreted as having messianic significance by the earliest readers of the LXX?

2. Definition and Method

For the purposes of this study, messianism will be defined as the expectation of a future eschatological figure who will act as God's agent for the restoration of Israel.¹⁶⁷ Although non-royal

¹⁶⁴ *I Apol.* 32.12-13 (*ANF* 1:173-4).

¹⁶⁵ *Pharaoh's Counsellors*, 92.

¹⁶⁶ E.g. William Horbury finds in the LXX Pentateuch evidence of continuity in messianic ideology between the period of the Chronicler and the Second Temple Period (“Monarchy and Messianism in the Greek Pentateuch,” 102ff.); Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*, 117-118; Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 165.

¹⁶⁷ Or multiple figures. This is essentially the definition adopted by those scholars engaged in the question of messianism in the LXX Balaam oracles: Collins, “the expectation of a figure who will act as God's designated agent in the eschatological time” (“Messianism and Exegetical Tradition,” 129); Horbury, “Messianism is taken in the broad sense as the expectation of a coming pre-eminent ruler.” (*Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 6-7); J. Lust, “Messianism can be tentatively defined as 1. The expectation of a future human and yet transcendent Messiah or saviour, 2. who will establish God's kingdom on earth, 3. in an eschatological era. In its narrower sense, the expected saviour is a descendant of David.”

forms of messianism may have circulated during the period in which the LXX was translated, the focus on conquest and rule make royal messianism the relevant topic.

In this chapter I will examine elements of the LXX that may have potential significance for a messianic reading of the text. Since the focus is on the meaning and significance of the LXX text, I will concentrate on elements which differ (in form or meaning) from the presumed Hebrew *Vorlage*, or the Hebrew “majority text.”¹⁶⁸

The translations that will be examined are: (3) τὰ ἔνδοξα ἀρχόντων ἐν αὐτῷ (in 23:21); (4) ὥς δόξα μονοκέρωτος for כְּתוּעַפַּת רֶאֱם (in 23:22 and 24:8); (5) the translation of 24:7; and (6) ἄνθρωπος in 24:7 and 24:17.

3. τὰ ἔνδοξα ἀρχόντων ἐν αὐτῷ (23:21)

Numbers 23:21

LXX	SP
οὐκ ἔσται μόχθος ἐν Ἰακώβ,	לא אביט עון ביעקב
οὐδὲ ὀφθήσεται πόνος ἐν Ἰσραήλ.	ולא ראה עמל בישראל
κύριος ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῦ μετ’ αὐτοῦ,	יהוה אלהיו עמו
<u>τὰ ἔνδοξα ἀρχόντων ἐν αὐτῷ.</u>	<u>והרועת מלך בו:</u>

Balaam's second oracle begins in verse 18 with the reaffirmation of God's constancy toward Israel. God is not like a human that he should change his disposition toward his people, and God has determined to bless Israel, not to curse it.¹⁶⁹ Verse 21 continues this theme with a prediction that there will be no misfortune in Israel. οὐκ ἔσται is a contextual rendering, and the future tense is closer to the

(“Messianism and Septuagint with Special Emphasis on the Pentateuch,” 142); Salvesen, “a Davidic or priestly figure who will perform acts of deliverance for the Jewish people and establish God's kingdom on earth in the last days.” (“Messianism in the Septuagint?” 245).

¹⁶⁸E.g. “Gog” in 23:7 appears in the SP and likely in the LXX *Vorlage*. However, it should be discussed since it does not appear in what may have been the most widespread Hebrew version, the MT, and has a cumulative effect with other elements in the LXX translation.

¹⁶⁹The translator, perhaps to soften the anthropomorphic implication, adds ὥς.

Samaritan text here, which has לֹא־אֵרְאֶה “I shall not see” in contrast to the MT’s לֹא־הָיָה “he has not seen.” The SP/LXX reading is a prediction of a future state of events, whereas the MT’s reading directs the oracle toward the past or present. μόχθος is somewhat unexpected here, as the translator of Numbers usually gives ἀμαρτία for עֵוָה,¹⁷⁰ however it is acceptable in light of the following parallel term עָמַל (πόνος).

In the final line, תְּרוּעָה is translated by τὰ ἔνδοξα. תְּרוּעָה refers to a loud sound, battle cry, or a signal.¹⁷¹ It occurs earlier in Numbers as the signal for the camp to depart (Num 10:5, 6), a celebratory noise (29:1), and as a war signal (39:6). In each of these other instances, תְּרוּעָה is translated by σημασία. Here, תְּרוּעָה probably describes acclamation given to a king.¹⁷² The LXX’s translation ἔνδοξος is a unique translation for תְּרוּעָה in the LXX. *BHS* suggests the translator read וְתוֹרַעָה, and construed it as “majesty.” Horbury comments, “The Septuagint with τὰ ἔνδοξα here leans in Hellenistic fashion towards acclamation, δοξολογία, using ἔνδοξα “glorious things” in a sense which corresponds with the Hebrew use of [*cabod*] and its cognates in the sense of praise.”¹⁷³ In the LXX, ἔνδοξος most often refers to the honor or esteem attributed to individuals.

A more dramatic departure from the Hebrew is the translator’s replacement of מֶלֶךְ with ἀρχόντων.¹⁷⁴ Commentators have noted the tendency in the LXX to avoid βασιλεύς, often replacing it with ἄρχων, and the general absence of βασιλεύς from Jewish documents of the Ptolemaic period.¹⁷⁵ In

¹⁷⁰At 5:15, 31(2x); 14:18, 19, 34; 15:31; 18:1(2x); 30:16.

¹⁷¹Cf. BDB, “תְּרוּעָה.” Wevers emphasizes the audible nature of the term (*NGTN*, 396).

¹⁷²Cf. the translations of the NRSV, JPS. Compare Levine, who takes תְּרוּעָה here as a battle cry of the divine king, God (*Numbers*, 184).

¹⁷³Hobury, “Monarchy and Messianism,” 119.

¹⁷⁴SP reads the same as the MT for this line. The editor of 4Q27 also reconstructs the scroll to agree with the MT (DJD XII, 235). It is possible that this reading reflects a Hebrew recension that substituted מֶלֶךְ with נָשִׂיא, but there is no evidence for such a recension here.

¹⁷⁵E.g. Richard A. Freund, “From Kings to Archons : Jewish Political Ethics and Kingship Passages in the LXX.” *SJOT* 2 (1990): 58-72; Alexander Rofé. “Qumranic Paraphrases, The Greek Deuteronomy and the Late History of the Biblical נָשִׂיא.” *Textus* 14 (1988): 163-174; John W. Wevers, “The LXX Translator of Deuteronomy,” 57-89.

later Hebrew usage נשיא tends to take the place of מלך in reference to Jewish rulers, and ἄρχων, a common translation equivalent of נשיא, may reflect this.¹⁷⁶ Some scholars conclude that the LXX translators were treading lightly in their political situation by avoiding the mention of future Jewish kings (βασιλεῖς).¹⁷⁷ Wevers, on the other hand, suggests that this tendency is motivated by a theological conviction that only יהוה is king of Israel.¹⁷⁸ Regardless of the translator's motivation for avoiding βασιλεύς, avoiding the term would not necessarily exclude readers from interpreting ἀρχόντων as a reference to kings. However, throughout LXX Numbers ἄρχων (for נשיא) is used to refer to tribal leaders, and this probably would have been the interpretation of the translator and his earliest readers.

The plural form, ἀρχόντων, is also unexpected, and might possibly be understood as multiple tribal leaders.¹⁷⁹ Horbury suggests that the ἀρχόντων envisioned may have been Moses and Joshua, commonly linked together in the LXX Pentateuch, as well as other tribal leaders.¹⁸⁰ John Collins, on the other hand, suggests it could be interpreted as a reference to the rise of a line of rulers of the tribe of Judah.¹⁸¹ This latter suggestion seems more consistent with the focus of the rest of the oracle.

Horbury argues that this use of ἄρχων facilitates an exegetical connection between this text and others that use ἄρχων to speak of Israelite kings.¹⁸² Gen 49:10, Jacob's prophecy that an ἄρχων (שבט) will not depart from the line of Judah; Deut 17:15, where Israel is instructed to set an ἄρχων (מלך) over them; Deut 28:36, the prediction to Israel that the Lord will carry away σε καὶ τοὺς ἀρχοντάς σου (מלך) to a foreign land where they will serve foreign gods; and Deut 33:4-5, Moses' prediction of an ἄρχων (מלך) in the beloved one, when rulers of peoples have been gathered together with the tribes of

¹⁷⁶Hobury, "Monarchy and Messianism," 93-4.

¹⁷⁷Freund, "Kings to Archons," 60.

¹⁷⁸NGTN, 396. Some commentators (e.g. Levine, *Numbers*, 2:184) interpret "king" here as referring to Yahweh. Evidently the LXX translator did not take it this way.

¹⁷⁹There is no clear evidence for a plural Hebrew *Vorlage*, although one may be suggested by *Tg. Onq.* "their king."

¹⁸⁰Horbury, "Monarchy and Messianism," 120.

¹⁸¹Collins, "Messianism and Exegetical Tradition," 142. Although he does not see this rendering as particularly eschatological.

¹⁸²Horbury, "Monarchy and Messianism," 93-4.

Israel.” ἄρχων appears in each of these texts, and interpretive connections would have been reinforced by this shared rendering. Horbury concludes, “These three oracular passages [Gen 49:10; Num 23:21; Deut 33:4-5] are made to refer, more clearly than in the Hebrew, to the Israelite succession of rulers, and the use of *archon* in all three binds them more closely than in the Hebrew to the Israelite ruler ordained in Deuteronomy.”¹⁸³ Horbury's proposal is possible, but it should be remembered that ἄρχων is a very common word in the LXX and therefore may not have attracted any special attention.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, little to no evidence exists that ἄρχων was seen as an exegetical link between these texts around the time the LXX was produced. The scant nature of Horbury's evidence suggests we should be cautious about assigning his theory too much weight.

4. μονόκερως for מלך in 23:22 and 24:8

	LXX	MT
23:22	θεὸς ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν αὐτοὺς ἐξ Αἰγύπτου· ὥς δόξα μονοκέρωτος αὐτῷ.	אל מוציאם ממצרים כתועפת ראם לו
24:8	ὁ θεὸς ὠδήγησεν αὐτὸν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου, ὥς δόξα μονοκέρωτος αὐτῷ· ἔδεται ἔθνη ἐχθρῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὰ πάχη αὐτῶν ἐκμυελιεῖ, καὶ ταῖς βολίσιν αὐτοῦ κατατοξεύσει ἐχθρόν.	אל מוציאו ממצרים כתועפת ראם לו יאכל גוים צריו ועצמותיהם יגרם וחציו ימחץ

In his engaging and controversial study on the LXX Psalms, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*, Joachim Schaper makes an extended argument for the messianic significance of μονόκερως both in the Psalms and in Num 23:22 and 24:8. Schaper's volume has received mixed reviews, but his work has generated discussion and has significant potential impact on our understanding of messianism in the LXX, and so deserves some treatment here.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 48-49.

¹⁸⁴ ἄρχων occurs 535 times in the LXX (Rahlfs), translating *sar* in 246 instances, *rosh* at 106 instances, נשיא at 94 instances, מלך at 18 instances, and multiple other terms <10 times each.

¹⁸⁵ See e.g. Melvin K. H. Peters, review of Joachim Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*, *JBL* 116 (1997): 350-2.;

The term **רָאם** appears nine times in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁸⁶ Although the specific meaning of **רָאם** is uncertain, in light of similar terms in cognate languages, the standard English translation, “wild ox,” is adequate.¹⁸⁷ In seven of its nine occurrences, the LXX translators gave **μονόκερως** as its equivalent.¹⁸⁸ Although **μονόκερως** means (etymologically) “one-horned” (NETS translates “unicorn”), there is some uncertainty as to what the LXX translators meant by the term.¹⁸⁹ In Deut 33:17 the translator gives **κέρατα μονοκέρωτος τὰ κέρατα αὐτοῦ** “his horns are horns of a unicorn,” apparently unconcerned about assigning plural horns to a unicorn.

This stereotypical translation of **μονόκερως** for **רָאם** has often been explained as a result of the LXX translators' general ignorance of **רָאם**, and adoption of **μονόκερως** because of its connotations of fierceness and power.¹⁹⁰ Schaper objects to these explanations, arguing that the translators probably were familiar with **רָאם**, a term in use only a few centuries earlier.¹⁹¹ He suggests that anyone unfamiliar with the bull imagery could have gone to Job 39, where its characteristics were described. Schaper asserts that, instead, the LXX translators were deliberate in their use of **μονόκερως**, choosing it because of its particular connotations, and using other terms when deemed appropriate. Schaper cites Isa 34:7, where the translator gives **οἱ ἄδποι** (lit: “mighty ones”) for **רִאמִים** as an indication that **μονόκερως** was not adopted as a stereotyped rendering of **רָאם**, but was an intentional translation by the LXX translators.

Schaper argues that **μονόκερως** has a significant role in what he calls a “messianic network” of

Claude Cox, "Schaper's Eschatology Meets Kraus's Theology of the Psalms," in Robert J. V. Hiebert, Claude E. Cox, and Peter J. Gentry, *The Old Greek Psalter: Studies in Honour of Albert Pietersma* (JSOTSup 332; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Albert Pietersma, review of Joachim Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*, *BO* 54 (1997): 185-190.

¹⁸⁶At Num 23:22; 24:8; Deut 33:17; Isa 34:7; Ps 22:22; 29:6; 92:11; Job 39:9, 10.

¹⁸⁷See *HALOT*, “**רָאם**,” 1163-4.

¹⁸⁸The exceptions are at Isa 34:7, where the translator gave **οἱ ἄδποι** “the prominent ones” (NETS) for **רִאמִים**, and Job 39:10 supplies a pronoun instead of repeating the **רִים** of the previous verse..

¹⁸⁹A TLG search of the term yields only 10 hits that predate the LXX.

¹⁹⁰Schaper, *Eschatology*, 115-6 (quoting H. Brandenburg). Cf. Wevers, *NGTD*, at 33:17.

¹⁹¹Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*, 115-6.

texts in the LXX. In all of its Septuagintal occurrences but one, Schaper observes, *μονόκερως* appears in a positive context.¹⁹² In the Hebrew version of Psalm 22 and the Hebrew and Greek versions of Psalm 92(91), Schaper concludes that bull/unicorn imagery has to do with God's saving power.¹⁹³ In Ps 77(78):69 the translator apparently read *רָמִים* (a possible form of *רִאמִים*) instead of the more likely *רָמִים* (= MT). Schaper argues that Ps 77(78) directly contradicts Deut 33:17 by explaining and endorsing the election of David and Jerusalem, in contrast to the religious tradition underlying Deuteronomy 33 that holds the North (Shiloh) to be the center of the Israelite religion. Schaper finds it noteworthy that both of these texts contain the imagery of the wild bull or unicorn to depict divine power or invincibility.¹⁹⁴

In addition to the term *μονόκερως* itself, Schaper finds unicorn imagery in the vision of Daniel, in 8:5-8 where Alexander is represented as a single horn of a goat.¹⁹⁵ Although the reference is not to divine glory or power, Schaper notes that unicorn imagery is used of a singularly important individual who had a profound effect on his time. Schaper concludes, “Therefore we can assume a certain *structural* similarity in the application of the imagery: both messianic figures *and* outstanding historical personalities could be invested with literary imagery alluding to their virtually super-human powers.”¹⁹⁶

Schaper concludes that the appearance of *μονόκερως* (with all its associations of divine power and deliverance) links these texts (in the Psalms and in Numbers) together with other texts that were taken to be messianic. This constitutes what Schaper calls “something like Septuagintal network of messianic (or rather 'messianized') texts.”¹⁹⁷ These texts, linked together by their interpretation in the Second Temple period, also became connected in translation via shared vocabulary, namely

¹⁹²The negative occurrence is in Ps 21(22):22, where in the Greek the psalmist appeals to be delivered from the “horns of the unicorns.” Schaper argues that the Hebrew means that deliverance will come from the horns of the wild bulls[*רָמִים*], but that the LXX translator, confronted with the apparent contradiction of an appeal for deliverance juxtaposed with a declaration of deliverance, misread the text (*Eschatology*, 109-10).

¹⁹³*Eschatology*, 111.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 116.

μονόκερως. The term μονόκερως, therefore, served as a signal to readers that a particular text could be interpreted as referring to the messiah.

Schaper's argument is formally similar to Horbury's discussed above: lexical connections between different texts that, even if not intended by the LXX translators, would be noticed by readers of the LXX. These readers would have existing interpretive connections reinforced by this shared vocabulary, or would have generated new ones. While this approach is not uncommon and is sure to yield interesting results, it is weak without concrete evidence of these interpretations taking place. This evidence is lacking in Schaper's reconstruction. How are we to know with any level of certainty what sort of connections early readers of the LXX would have made? Schaper's arguments are further problematic. Schaper reads this network of texts as messianic largely because of their connection to Balaam's oracles, which Schaper assumes are messianic. This is the very issue being questioned here, and Schaper fails to argue the case that Balaam's oracles are in fact messianic.

5. Numbers 24:7

	LXX	SP
Num 24:7	ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν, καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἡ Γὼγ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀυξήθησεται ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ.	יִזְל מִים מִדְּלִי וְזָרְעוּ בְּמִים רַבִּים וְיָרוּם מִגּוֹן מַלְכוֹ וְתִתְנַשֵּׂא מַלְכוּתוֹ:

The Samaritan text reads מִגּוֹן instead of the MT's מִזְאֵן, and probably reflects the *Vorlage* of the LXX. The MT and the SP are otherwise nearly identical.¹⁹⁸ Vermes argues that the LXX, as well the other versions with the exception of the Vulgate, take 24:7 as messianic. He summarizes, “It is clear

¹⁹⁸Whereas the MT reads וְתִתְנַשֵּׂא, the SP has וְתִתְנַשֵּׂא. The evidence from the scrolls, where extant, agrees with the MT. The editor of 4Q27 reconstructs מִגּוֹן.

from these texts that the versions as a whole interpret יל as “to come forth,” “to arise”; מים as the Messiah; and מדליו (or rather, מדליותיו) as “the children of Israel.”¹⁹⁹ These interpretations are, he argues, rooted in midrashic associations, e.g. יל-מים with יל-צדק (Isa 45:8) and צדק with the Messiah (Jer 23:5; 33:15).²⁰⁰ The Septuagint translation represents, then, another example of this sort of midrashic interpretation of Numbers 24:7.

Although the translator’s lexical choices may be considered interpretive, it should be remembered that the translator still maintains close correspondence to his source text in word order and in morpheme-for-morpheme translation, as can be seen in the following table.

ἐξελεύσεται	יל	()	ן	βασιλεία	מלכ
ἄνθρωπος	מים	ἐθνῶν	במים	αὐτοῦ,	ן
ἐκ	מ	πολλῶν,	רבים	καὶ	ן
τοῦ σπέρματος	דלי	καὶ	ן	αὐξηθήσεται	תתנשא
αὐτοῦ,	ן	ὕψωθήσεται	ירום	ἡ βασιλεία	מלכות
καὶ	ן	ἥ	מ	αὐτοῦ.	ן
κυριεύσει	זרע	Γῶγ	גוג		

5.1. ἐξελεύσεται

The Greek verb ἐξέρχομαι renders גול “flow.” The verb גול occurs infrequently in the Hebrew Bible, and does not have a consistent LXX equivalent. Lust suggested that the translator may have read יל as a form of אזל “to go,” a verb that occurs in the OT five times.²⁰¹ It is also possible that since the translator has abandoned the metaphor of water in the first line of the verse, he adopts a verb better

¹⁹⁹Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 159.

²⁰⁰Ibid.

²⁰¹Ibid., 237.

suited to ἄνθρωπος. The word choice evokes other biblical predictions. ἐξελεύσεται appears in a similar context in Micah 5:2(1): “... from you shall come forth [אֲנִי/ἐξελεύσεται] for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.” The prophet goes on to describe this figure, who “shall be great to the ends of the earth” (v. 4[3]) and will provide protection for the people of Israel. This image of a ruling figure who emerges from Israel is shared with Numbers 24. Similarly, Isaiah 11:1 reads, “A shoot [חֹטֶר/ῥάβδος] shall come out [אֲנִי/ἐξελεύσεται] from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”²⁰²

5.2. ἄνθρωπος

In the Hebrew, Num 24:7a-b continues the imagery of abundant water that began in verse 6. Lines c-d of verse 7 begin speaking in more direct terms about an exalted king, a theme that continues into verse 8 and following. In the LXX, the translator treats verse 7 as a more independent unit. The translator abandons the metaphor of water and makes the subject of v. 7 explicit by giving ἄνθρωπος. Vermes argued that the translator interpreted מֶלֶךְ as a reference to the messiah.²⁰³ Lust, on the other hand, suggests that the translator's eye simply skipped over מֶלֶךְ to the *mem* of מְדַלִּי, and the translator supplied the subject from the context.²⁰⁴ Whereas the original phrase apparently had to do with the prosperity of Israel, like a tree planted by water, the phrase is refocused on an individual figure. Although ἄνθρωπος is anarthrous, contextually it must refer to a specific figure.²⁰⁵ The use of ἄνθρωπος and its significance will be addressed in more detail below.

²⁰²That at least the Isaiah passage could be connected with Numbers 24 is shown by Justin, who conflates Numbers 24:17 with Isaiah 11 (*1 Apol.* 32).

²⁰³Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 159.

²⁰⁴Lust, “The Greek Versions,” 236.

²⁰⁵M.F. Collins calls this use of ἄνθρωπος “particular but unspecified” (*Messianic Interpretation of the Balaam Oracles*, 36).

5.3. ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ

מַדְלִיּוֹ likely posed a challenge to the translator. The term דְּלִי “buckets” appears elsewhere only at Isa 40:15, where the nations are compared to a drop in a bucket. Levine suggests that מַדְלִיּוֹ is a masculine form of a word meaning “branches” otherwise found in the Hebrew Bible only in the feminine (דְּלִיּוֹתַי Ezek 17:6; 19:11, 31:7, 9, 12).²⁰⁶ Others suggest simply emending the text to read מַדְלִיּוֹתַי.²⁰⁷ Taken in this form, the verse continues the tree imagery of verse 6. Perhaps a more likely explanation is that the translator read מִלְדֵּי “out of his children.”²⁰⁸ Such a reading would perhaps prompt the translator to provide a more interpretive rendering of the rest of the line. Alternatively, the translator may have simply taken “branches” as a metaphor for offspring.²⁰⁹ It is also possible that the translator may have been influenced by זֶרַע in the following line.

5.4. καὶ κυριεύσει

The translator seems to have read זֶרַע (“seed”) as זֶרַע (“arm, strength”) and gave a translation that explicates the metaphor. Vermes suggests that the LXX (as well as the Palestinian Targumim) combines both the concepts of “seed” (σπέρμα) and of “arm” (κυριεύω) in its renderings.²¹⁰ However, Vermes fails to account for the potential alternate readings of the previous phrase, especially מַדְלִיּוֹ, and the fact that the LXX still maintains an “interlinear” approach. It is also possible, as Collins argues, that the translator took זֶרַע with the first part of the verse, hence τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ.²¹¹

As Lust observes, κυριεύω in the LXX never carries a specifically messianic sense. However,

²⁰⁶Levine, *Numbers*, 197.

²⁰⁷E.g. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 159.

²⁰⁸One option considered by Lust, “Greek Version,” 236. מִלְדֵּי “[one] of the children of” appears in Exodus 2:6 and 1 Chronicles 20:4.

²⁰⁹As Vermes suggests, *Scripture and Tradition*, 160.

²¹⁰E.g. Tg. Ps.-J. “The seed of the sons of Jacob shall rule”; Frg. Tg. “Their children shall rule.” Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 160.

²¹¹Collins, “Messianism and Exegetical Tradition,” 143.

this may not have prevented its readers from finding a connection to the messiah of the New Testament, often referred to as κύριος. Lust writes, “If the verb and its context belong to the original layers of the LXX, it does not seem to imply a positive messianic connotation, but, once adopted in the Christian tradition, it may have facilitated messianic interpretations.”²¹²

5.5. ἐθνῶν πολλῶν

The Hebrew phrase במים רבים continues the tree metaphor: a thriving tree planted by plentiful water.²¹³ Similar language (על־מים רבים) appears in Ezekiel 17:5-6, where a seed planted in fertile soil by abundant water is a metaphor for a thriving nation (cf. also Ezek 17:8; 19:10). The translator of Numbers may have read עמים רבים, a reading shared by the Targumim.²¹⁴ It is also possible that he simply understood במים רבים as a metaphorical reference to many nations.

5.6. Γώγ

Perhaps the most striking difference in the LXX is the variant Γώγ (גִּיג SP)] אַגַּג (MT).²¹⁵ The Samaritan Pentateuch has Gog, and presumably represents the reading of the LXX source text. Although the reading Gog is almost certainly secondary, its attestation in both the Septuagint and Samaritan versions indicates that many readers would have encountered it. While the reading Γώγ is not an instance of interpretive translation, it is significant in shaping the sense of the resulting text.

Both Gog and Agag are characters that occur elsewhere in the Bible, but in contexts that would signal very different things to readers. Agag was a king of the Amalekites, who was defeated by King

²¹²Lust, “The Greek Versions,” 237.

²¹³The phrase has multiple uses in the Hebrew Bible: a literal sense at Num 20:11, where abundant water (מים רבים) came out from the rock; or as a metaphor to describe dangerous situations, e.g. Ps 17(18):17 “he drew me out of mighty waters (מים רבים), he delivered me from my strong enemy”.

²¹⁴Cf. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 159. Both BHK and BHS propose emendations that would support the LXX rendering, but cite no Hebrew witnesses in support. The Scrolls agree with MT, where extant.

²¹⁵Aq, Sym. Th. also give Gog. *Tg. Onq.*, Vulgate have Agag.

Saul in 1 Samuel 15. Instead of obeying God's command and completely destroying the Amalekites and their belongings, Saul took Agag captive and saved the best of the plunder. Samuel came, rebuked Saul, and killed Agag.

After this Agag is not mentioned again in the Bible (although Haman is named as an Agagite in the book of Esther).²¹⁶ Agag is not a significant figure in the Bible, nor does he play a significant role in extrabiblical Jewish traditions. Therefore the prediction about an Israelite king who would be greater than Agag would have seemed to be an obscure historical reference to readers in the Second Temple period. Furthermore, in the biblical text Agag does not appear to be an exceptionally powerful ruler, and so a comparison with Agag is not particularly meaningful.

In contrast, Γῶγ would have carried eschatological connotations for the readers of the LXX. Gog, from the land of Magog, is described in Ezekiel 38-39 as a foreign ruler whom God will incite to attack Israel. Then God will display his power to the nations by destroying Gog (38:18-23). Gog also appears in the LXX version of Amos 7:1 as the king of a locust-like army that devours the grass of the land. The New Testament book of Revelation, drawing on Ezekiel 38-39, describes Gog and Magog as nations that will participate in the final eschatological battle between Satan and God (Rev 20:8).

In these occurrences, Gog functions as a symbol of nations or rulers opposed to Israel and to God, who imperils the existence of the people of God.²¹⁷ The appearance of Gog in the LXX and Samaritan versions of Numbers 24:7, by evoking the eschatological and apocalyptic traditions associated with Gog, would have given the verse an eschatological thrust not present in the Masoretic Text.

²¹⁶ E.g. Esther 3:1.

²¹⁷ Gog also functions similarly in extra-biblical literature, and remains a significant symbol in Christian apocalyptic thought to the present. See Nicholas M. Railton, "Gog and Magog: the History of a Symbol," *Evangelical Quarterly* 75 (2003): 23-43.

5.7. βασιλεία αὐτοῦ

The Hebrew text refers to מלכו “his king.” In contrast, the LXX renders βασιλεία, “kingdom.” Although one might expect the translation βασιλεύς, scholars have observed the intentional avoidance of the use of βασιλεύς as a designation for Israelite rulers.²¹⁸ In this case it appears that the LXX translator has resorted to harmonization by employing βασιλεία in his renderings of both מלכו and מלכותו.

5.8. καὶ ἀύξηθήσεται

αὐξάνω is employed as a counterpart to נשא only twice in the LXX.²¹⁹ It more often translates פרה “be fruitful, multiply,” a term that usually has to do with the fruitfulness of animals, plants, or humans.

5.9. Numbers 24:7: Evaluation

In the Hebrew, 24:7 is a transitional verse. Sticks 7a-b continue the language of abundant water (symbolizing fruitfulness in descendants) that began in verse 6. Sticks 7c-d begin to describe the exaltation of the nation's king, continued in vv. 8-9 in the language of military conquest. In the LXX, the translator treats 24:7 as somewhat independent of the preceding verse, abandoning the water imagery in favor of a translation that transitions to the description of divine guidance and power on behalf of Israel. Although this departure from the source text may be explained by textual corruption or misreading, it is noteworthy that he translated it as referring to the appearance and rule of an individual. The translator's use of ἄνθρωπος to render the metaphor מים suggests that the translator already understood this passage to be about a particular individual, whom he designated as ἄνθρωπος.

²¹⁸E.g. Richard A. Freund, “From Kings to Archons: Jewish Political Ethics and Kingship Passages in the LXX,” *SJOT* 2 (1990): 58-72.

²¹⁹Cf. 1 Ch 14:2. Lust suggests the both the Hebrew text and translation at 1 Ch 14:2 represent a deliberate allusion to the Balaam oracle (“The Greek Version of Balaam's Oracles,” 237).

Furthermore, the terms ἐξελεύσεται and ἄνθρωπος may have evoked other texts with messianic or eschatological associations, and Γὼγ almost certainly would have. Consequently, LXX Numbers 24:7 would have been understood to be eschatological (and perhaps messianic) in scope, with ἄνθρωπος at the center of its predictions.

6. ἄνθρωπος in LXX Numbers 24:7, 17: A Messianic Title?

	LXX	SP
Num 24:7	ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν, καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἡ Γὼγ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀυξηθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ.	יִזְל מִיָּם מַדְלִיּוֹ וְזָרְעוֹ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים וְיִירוֹם מִגּוֹג מַלְכוֹ וְתִתְנַשֵּׂא מַלְכוּתוֹ:
Num 24:17	Δείξω αὐτῷ, καὶ οὐχὶ νῦν· μακαρίζω, καὶ οὐκ ἐγγίξει· ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ἰακώβ, καὶ ἀναστήσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ Ἰσραήλ, καὶ θραύσει τοὺς ἀρχηγοὺς Μωάβ, καὶ προνομεύσει πάντας υἱοὺς Σήθ.	אֲרֹאנוּ וְלֹא עַתָּה אֲשׁוּרנוּ וְלֹא קָרוֹב דֶּרֶךְ כּוֹכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב וְקָם שִׁבְט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וּמַחֲנֶיךָ פֶּאֶתִי מוֹאָב וְקִרְקֶר כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת:

ἄνθρωπος appears twice in the Balaam oracles as a translation for two symbolic elements: מִיָּם (in the third oracle, at 24:7), and שִׁבְט (in the fourth oracle, at 24:17). This section will focus on these two occurrences of ἄνθρωπος and their significance.

6.1. Numbers 24:7

ἄνθρωπος appears in 24:7 (discussed above) as part of a reworking of the text in which the translator maintains an “interlinear” correspondence with the Hebrew text while interpreting it to refer to the emergence and rule of a figure referred to as ἄνθρωπος, “a man.”²²⁰ The significance attributed to ἄνθρωπος here is debated. As noted above, Vermes finds in ἄνθρωπος a messianic interpretation of the entire verse, by means of a complex of midrashic associations. On the other hand, Lust argues that ἄνθρωπος is simply a gloss inserted by the translator as he worked through the passage. The level to which the translator deliberated on his use of ἄνθρωπος is ultimately uncertain. However, its appearance in 24:7 indicates that the translator had an individual figure in mind who was central to the eschatological predictions.

The translator's adoption of ἄνθρωπος in 24:7 probably influenced his use of the term in 24:17. Its appearance in 24:17, where the Hebrew terms are more common and the syntax more straightforward, suggests that the translator saw continuity between the third and fourth oracles, and understood ἄνθρωπος to play a key role in both texts.

6.2. Numbers 24:17

ἄνθρωπος occurs in all the major LXX witnesses.²²¹ Some later witnesses attest to different readings, but there is no strong evidence for an alternate LXX reading.²²² This later diversity perhaps reflects textual uncertainty at a later point in the transmission of the text, as well as interpretive diversity in concurrent understandings of the text.

²²⁰The LXX treatment of this verse is not dissimilar to the treatment of other versions, especially the Targumim, which also give a specific subject: *Tg. Onq.* gives “king”, *Tg. Ps.-J.* “king”; *Frg. Tg.* “king” (Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 159).

²²¹According to the Göttingen edition, although some minor versions give alternate readings. All the extant Hebrew witnesses give שֶׁבַע.

²²²E.g. ἡγοούμενος (Justin Martyr, *Dial.*, CVI 4), *dux* (Irenaeus, *Demonstr.*, 58; *Adv. Haeres.*, III:9:2), “anointed one” (*Tg. Onq.*), “redeemer and ruler” (*Tg. Neof.*), “the Messiah, the mighty sceptre.” (*Tg. Ps.-J.*). C.f. also CD 7:18-21 “...The sceptre is the Prince of the whole congregation...” *T. Judah* 24:1-6 appears to have read ἄνθρωπος, “...a man will arise from among my descendants...”

In Numbers the Hebrew word שבט is used with the principal meaning “tribe.” When this is the case, the translator gives φυλή, a term that denotes a tribe, familial group, or race. φυλή is by far the most common translation equivalent for שבט in the LXX.²²³ After this, ῥάβδος and σκῆπτρον are the second and third most common translation equivalents, both carrying the sense of “staff” or “rod.” The latter, σκῆπτρον, does not appear in the LXX Pentateuch at all. ῥάβδος occurs a handful of times in Numbers: in ch.17 as a symbol of tribal leadership (e.g. 17:18), and in ch. 20 as Moses' rod with which he strikes the rock to bring forth water. In both of these chapters ῥάβδος also translates מטה. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch ῥάβδος is used for Moses' staff (Ex 4, 7-8 10, 14, 17), a symbol of the status of a tribal leader (Gen 32), the wooden rods Jacob used to manipulate the breeding of his flocks, and as a staff used for walking or striking (Gen 32:10, Exod 21:19, 20).

The only exception to this use of שבט in Numbers is at 24:17 where it is paralleled by “a star from Jacob” that will crush Moab. Its usual equivalent, φυλή, would have been inappropriate here. Furthermore, as noted above, σκῆπτρον does not appear to have been an option for the translators of the LXX Pentateuch. Presumably the translator considered ῥάβδος as an option, but rejected it in favor of ἄνθρωπος. It is not clear why the translator would have objected to ῥάβδος, but perhaps he wished to distinguish the symbol here from αἱ ῥάβδοι of the tribal leaders, Aaron, Moses, and Balaam.

Other explanations for ἄνθρωπος have been suggested. Wevers asserts that the translator interpreted the metaphor of a scepter to ensure that the text referred to an individual figure.²²⁴ Furthermore, by using ἄνθρωπος, the translator avoided the explicit notion of a king in Israel.²²⁵ Wevers finds a tendency to avoid mention of a king in Israel in the LXX Pentateuch, especially in Numbers and

²²³ שבט appears in the Hebrew Bible 191 times. Of these, 121 are translated by φυλή, 27 by ῥάβδος, and 16 by σκῆπτρον.

²²⁴ Wevers, *NGTN*, 413.

²²⁵ Lust comments, “This appears to do away with the royal character of the expected figure” (“The Greek Version of Balaam's Oracles,” 241).

Deuteronomy.²²⁶ Behind this, he suggests, is a conviction that only יהוה is king of Israel. Although the avoidance of βασιλεύς in these books is striking (e.g. 23:21), the translator cannot be said to be completely avoiding the notion of a royal figure, as in 24:7 ἄνθρωπος is said to have a kingdom. Even if we grant that this tendency does exist in the LXX Pentateuch, it is not clear that the translator would have found “scepter” objectionable, since he employed similar terminology that seems to imply kingship just as explicitly. Furthermore, the translator could have simply used ἄρχων, as at 23:21.

Lust, similarly, suggests that the translator is interpreting the symbol of “scepter.” He observes that Num 24:17 usually appears alongside or linked to other biblical texts. This linking may explain the translator's choice of ἄνθρωπος, which Lust suggests may have been evoked by the ἄνθος which appears in Isa 11:1, a text frequently linked to Num 24:17.²²⁷ Furthermore, Lust goes on to argue that ἄνθρωπος has no particular messianic associations. It is instead a generic term, as if the translator were saying “someone.”²²⁸

Horbury maintains that ἄνθρωπος in 24:7 comes about as a result of מִיָּם being read as אֲדָם, “man.”²²⁹ Although it is difficult to see how this reading would have arisen, Salvesen suggests that it may represent an early reading tradition for this difficult text.²³⁰ Subsequently, Horbury asserts, the translator chose ἄνθρωπος to connect the victorious warrior of v. 17 with the ruling figure of v. 7. In LXX Numbers, ἄνθρωπος is also applied to other major figures: Moses in Num 12:3 (cf. Deut 33:1), Joshua in Num 27:16, and Balaam in 24:3. For Horbury, this along with the exalted context, indicates that the LXX translator understood ἄνθρωπος as a glorified figure, and that he did not intend to de-emphasize that individual's status.

These scholars tend to agree that ἄνθρωπος is an interpretive rendering of the source text,

²²⁶See Wevers, “The LXX Translator of Deuteronomy,” 87.

²²⁷E.g. Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 32.12-13; 1QSb 5:27-28.

²²⁸Lust, “The Greek Version of Balaam's Oracles,” 250.

²²⁹Horbury, “Monarchy and Messianism,” 121-2.

²³⁰A. Salvesen, *Symmachus in the Pentateuch* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1991), 134-5.

whether as a decoding of a metaphor, or as making explicit an implied subject. The significance of ἄνθρωπος, however, is another question entirely. Is ἄνθρωπος a generic term that simply refers to an unspecified historical king of Israel, or is it a term loaded with messianic and eschatological connotations that gives additional force to, or even modifies, the sense of the original text?

6.3. Similar Context: Genesis 49:10

A similar translation occurs in Genesis 49:10, a text also widely interpreted as messianic.²³¹ Jacob blesses his son Judah, telling him:

MT	לֹא־יִסּוּר שִׁבְט מִיְהוּדָה וּמַחְקֶק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד כִּי־יָבֹא שִׁילָה וְלוֹ יִקְהַת עַמִּים
LXX	οὐκ ἐκλείψει ἄρχων ἐξ Ἰούδα καὶ ἡγούμενος ἐκ τῶν μηρῶν αὐτοῦ, ἕως ἃν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ, καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκία ἐθνῶν.

In Genesis 49:10, שִׁבְט “scepter” and חֶקֶק “ruler's staff” are instances of metonymy, in which an attribute is substituted for the thing meant. The translator recodes the text, understanding the terms “sceptre” and “staff” as actually referring to the person holding the sceptre or staff (an ἄρχων/ἡγούμενος). Although this translation may not be literal, nothing new is brought to the meaning of the text.²³² Numbers 24:17 may be an instance of similar recoding, in which the translator understands ἄνθρωπος to be the thing to which שִׁבְט refers (i.e. ἄνθρωπος is the one holding the שִׁבְט). If this is the case, the translator did not intend ἄνθρωπος to mean something different than שִׁבְט, but simply to make the meaning of שִׁבְט more clear.

6.4. ἄνθρωπος in the Septuagint and “Man” in the Old Testament

Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether the term ἄνθρωπος itself has messianic connotations.

²³¹Collins, “Messianism and Exegetical Tradition,” 136ff.

²³²At least, from the translator’s perspective. Cf. Anneli Aejmelaeus, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators*, 306-7.

Lust argues that ἄνθρωπος has no messianic significance in the LXX.²³³ Although he acknowledges the possibility that “man” may have messianic connotations in some biblical passages as well as at Qumran and in some Christian texts, he argues that this does not necessarily transfer to ἄνθρωπος in the Septuagint.²³⁴ Furthermore, the LXX often uses ἄνθρωπος, not ἄνθρωπος, in messianic contexts (e.g. 2 Sam 23:1; Zech 6:12; 13:7). Lust maintains, therefore, that in the Septuagint ἄνθρωπος is not a technical term for the messiah. On the contrary, it is a more neutral term that often refers simply to an indefinite “someone.”²³⁵

Lust finds support for this conclusion in reception history. Philo cites Numbers 24:7 twice: in *Mos.* 1:290 (where he retells the Balaam story, including the third oracle but excluding the fourth) and *Praem.* 95. The latter is one of the few instances in which Philo speaks of a future eschatological age in which war, both among animals and among humankind, will cease. Philo mentions ἄνθρωπος as one who will lead an army to pacify the world of savage men.²³⁶ Although this might seem to imply that Philo understood this ἄνθρωπος to be a messianic figure, ἄνθρωπος plays no further role in Philo's vision of the future age. Furthermore, Lust observes, Philo typically eschews the notion of an individual messianic figure. Here, he suggests, ἄνθρωπος is intended as a reference to humankind, which stands in contrast to wild animals and brutish humans.²³⁷

The early Church fathers, Justin Martyr and Irenaus, do not preserve ἄνθρωπος, but instead give ἡγούμενος and *dux*, respectively.²³⁸ Their focus, furthermore, is on the star, which is applied to Jesus, or understood to be pointing to Jesus. Later Church fathers, such as Origen and Eusebius, do preserve ἄνθρωπος, but their discussion of the text is almost exclusively concerned with issues related to the

²³³For a similar argument, cf. Collins, “Messianism and Exegetical Tradition,” 144-7.

²³⁴Lust, “The Greek Version of Balaam's Oracles,” 249.

²³⁵Lust, “The Greek Version of Balaam's Oracles,” 250.

²³⁶Lust, “The Greek Version” 246.

²³⁷Ibid.

²³⁸Justin Martyr, *Dial.*, CVI 4; Irenaus, *Demonstr.*, 58; *Adv. Haeres.*, III:9:2.

humanity and divinity of Christ, not his messianic identity. The earliest Christian evidence does not have ἄνθρωπος yet focuses more on the messianic identity of Jesus. In contrast, the later Christian evidence, which reads ἄνθρωπος, is less concerned with messianism.²³⁹ In other words, the use of ἄνθρωπος is associated with non-messianic readings of Numbers 24:17. Lust concludes that, in the absence of clear evidence from Greek interpretive traditions that attach messianic significance to ἄνθρωπος, ἄνθρωπος cannot be understood as an example of messianic interpretation by the LXX translator.

In favor of messianic associations for ἄνθρωπος, Vermes and Horbury argue that, although ἄνθρωπος has a wide semantic range, it would have included messianic associations.²⁴⁰ They cite multiple situations in which a variety of terms meaning “man” are understood as messianic, either explicitly in the text or in later interpretation.²⁴¹

In addition, Horbury observes what he calls a “tendency toward titularity” in words and phrases found in messianically interpreted passages.²⁴² In other words, key terms in texts to which were attributed messianic significance could absorb some of that messianic significance, so that the use of a term elsewhere could bring to mind the significance of that entire messianic passage. Horbury applies this tendency to the phrase “son of man,” arguing that it became a messianic title as a result of its appearance in Daniel 7:13 and the messianic association of terms for “man.”²⁴³ If this indeed is what took place with “son of man,” it could have also presumably taken place with ἄνθρωπος. Its messianic use in various instances could have resulted in ἄνθρωπος gaining a titular function.²⁴⁴

²³⁹Lust, “The Greek Version” 241-5. Lust excludes as evidence *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which alludes to Num 24:17 twice at *T. Levi* 18 and *T. Judah* 24, as textually problematic since it contains Christian scribal intervention and exists in longer and shorter versions.

²⁴⁰See Vermes’s discussion on various terms meaning “man” in *Scripture and Tradition*, 56-66; Horbury, “Messianic Associations of the Son of Man,” 48ff.

²⁴¹E.g. אִישׁ (ἀνὴρ) in Kings 2:4 8:25; 9:5; 2Chr 6:16; 7:18; Zech 6:12; אִישׁ (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) Isa 32:2; גִּבּוֹר (ἀνὴρ) in 2 Sam 23:1; בֶּן־אָדָם (ἀνὴρ) Ps 80:17[LXX 79:18]; זָכָר (ἄρσεν) Isa 66:7; מוֹשִׁיעַ (ἄνθρωπον ὃς σώσει αὐτόν) Isa 19:20.

²⁴²Horbury, “Messianic Associations,” 52.

²⁴³Ibid, 48.

²⁴⁴Some commentators have taken Pilate’s statement in John 19:5, ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, as a possible allusion to Zech 6:12

The key issue that divides these two perspectives on ἄνθρωπος is the breadth of evidence allowed to have bearing. Lust restricts his discussion to only the term ἄνθρωπος, and therefore excludes any messianic associations that ἄνθρωπος etc. may have. On the other hand, Vermes and Horbury find messianic significance in the cluster of overlapping terms meaning “man.”²⁴⁵ Consequently, any use of any of these terms could contribute to or derive meaning from the concept “man.” For Vermes and Horbury, if a text with messianic associations uses ἄνθρωπος, those associations could be evoked in other instances where ἄνθρωπος or ἄνθρωπος or any other word meaning “man” appears, since they are all linked to the concept “man.” This approach is problematic because it ignores the distinction between words and concepts. For Vermes and Horbury, the concept “man” is virtually indistinguishable from the various Greek and Hebrew words that denote “man.”

A few observations on ἄνθρωπος are in order. First, messianic language cannot be reduced to a limited set of specific words. Biblical literature uses a variety of words and phrases to express ideas, and messianic language can be either direct or circumlocutional. Some words semantically overlap with ἄνθρωπος, and their connotations can overlap as well, although they do not necessarily do so.

Second, even a cursory examination of the LXX text shows that sometimes the translator adheres to a specific translation equivalent, and at other times varies vocabulary for no apparent reason. Similarly, the occurrence of calques in the LXX indicates that Greek words could acquire new meanings from their Hebrew counterparts. This means that the translator could conceivably have thought of ἄνθρωπος as carrying at least some the same meaning and resonances as מָלָאךְ. The translator stands in a unique position between the Hebrew and Greek texts, and in the translator the two languages intersect and influence one another.²⁴⁶

(ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος) and/or Numbers 24:7. See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 541; Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 875-876; Wayne A. Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 70-72.

²⁴⁵Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 56-66; Horbury, “Messianic Associations of the Son of Man,” 48ff.

²⁴⁶N. F. Marcos describes this tendency, “The translation into Greek of polysemic Hebrew words often produces an extension of the semantic field of the Greek word in question, creating new meanings” (*The Septuagint in Context*, (trans

Third, we should be careful not to overload the semantic content of a word. A word may have a wide range of potential meanings, but a much more limited range within a specific context. The most important determiner of whether or not ἄνθρωπος has messianic significance is not its use elsewhere, but its immediate context. ἄνθρωπος must be evaluated in the context of the verses in which it appears: 24:7 and 24:17, as well as the larger context of Balaam's oracles as a whole, and the broader narrative of Numbers 22-24.

Finally, the translator did not pick the term ἄνθρωπος at random. He chose ἄνθρωπος out of all the translation options at his disposal because he thought that it best communicated the meaning of the passage. The significance of ἄνθρωπος in Numbers 24:7, 17, should therefore be understood in light of how the translators of the LXX used ἄνθρωπος elsewhere, and how the rest of the Balaam account is translated.

We can conclude therefore that the use of the term ἄνθρωπος does alter the meaning of the oracles by focusing on a particular (but unspecified) figure who plays a key role in the exaltation of Israel. However, it should not be understood as a the translator imposing a messianic ideology on an otherwise non-messianic text. We have no indication that the translator of Numbers intended his translation of 24:7, 17 to evoke associations with any other text, and we have no way of knowing whether the translator had a larger conceptual scheme in mind that influenced him to use ἄνθρωπος, or if he was focused on translating this passage with no thought to how his translation might be understood in the light of other LXX passages.

7. Conclusion: Messianic Interpretation in the LXX Balaam Oracles

This chapter has examined major ways in which the LXX differs from its Hebrew *Vorlage*: (a) the phrase τὰ ἑνδοξα ἄρχόντων ἐν αὐτῷ in 23:21; (b) the translation μονόκερος for מֶרְאֵס in 23:22 and

Wilfred G. E. Watson; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 24.

24:8; (c) the LXX reworking of 24:7; and (d) the use of ἄνθρωπος in 24:7 and 24:17. Each of these changes could open new avenues for messianic interpretation, either by reworking the text or creating new possibilities for interpretive connections with other texts.

The definition of messianism adopted in this chapter includes three elements: (1) an individual; (2) eschatology or an eschatological context; and (3) an important role for that figure in God's actions/plans/relations with his people. All three of these elements are arguably present in the Hebrew text, but are even more explicit in the Septuagint version of Balaam's third and fourth oracles. While the Hebrew text, with its language of “seed,” “king,” “star,” and “scepter,” probably refers to an individual, the LXX focuses the oracles further on ἄνθρωπος “a man.” The use of ἄνθρωπος makes the reference to an individual unambiguous, and possibly links this text to others that predict a messianic figure as part of the continuation of the Davidic dynasty. Furthermore, the eschatological aspect of the oracles is heightened dramatically by the LXX's Gog (also present in the Samaritan text), which links Balaam's predictions to the eschatological conflict between Israel and Gog described in Ezekiel 38-39. Finally, the figure's role as conqueror and ruler is reaffirmed, especially in the reworked lines of 24:7.

The resulting Greek translation could, then, be said to have more potential than his Hebrew *Vorlage* to be interpreted as messianic. This does not mean that the translator imposed a messianic interpretation on the text. Instead, whether translating contextually or adhering closely to his source text, the translator gave what he considered to be the best rendering of the source text.

CONCLUSION: TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN THE LXX VERSION OF THE BALAAM ACCOUNT

This study has examined the text of the Septuagint version of Numbers 22-24 and attempted to contextualize and understand two particular problems raised by the translation: (1) the treatment of the divine name in the narrative; and (2) the translation of the third and fourth oracles.

The translator's clear preference for ὁ θεός in the narrative portions of the Balaam account probably reflects a negative bias against Balaam. Although the use of ὁ θεός hardly constitutes an explicit condemnation of Balaam, it distances Balaam from κύριος (the LXX's equivalent for the tetragrammaton).

This study has shown that the preference for ὁ θεός has precedent in other LXX texts, especially Genesis 4 and 6-8. Furthermore, both Philo and the rabbis associate different divine names with distinct aspects of God. Although these interpreters postdate the LXX, they were likely not the first to make such distinctions, and may represent an interpretive approach that influenced the LXX translators.

The translation of Balaam's third and fourth oracles also reflects the translator's interpretation of his text, although in a less systematic way. It is less clear that here the translator was attempting to bend the text toward a particular interpretation of the text. Instead, the translator's contextual renderings, especially with the use of the term ἄνθρωπος, resulted in a Greek text with new interpretive possibilities, and a greater potential to be taken as messianic.

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